

WHY AREN'T BLACK CHURCHES BEING PLANTED?

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BY

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Dedication:

This is dedicated to my Parents, Siblings (Riva and LeRoy) and their families, The Flagg's, The Monroe's and my spouse (Sonya). Most importantly, this is for my children to know that they can aspire to become even greater. I love you all.

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ABSTRACT

This focus of this thesis is to answer the question, why aren't black churches being planted and what are the problems as to why black churches aren't church planting. Interviews were conducted for this particular research. The questions were structured to learn more about their organizational structure, leadership style and their opinions on planting churches. It was also designed to learn if the effects of black liberation theology are still in existence. In the conclusion of this research, the findings are that there are many pastors who desire to plant churches but feel like they lack the resources to accomplish this goal. The other crippling factor is the ongoing practice of black liberation theology that is practiced in many predominately black churches today.

INTRODUCTION

The focus of this thesis is to answer the question, why aren't black churches being planted and what are the problems as to why black churches aren't church planting.

Throughout American history, the portrayal of the black church has been more centered on race relations while using scripture to either reinforce racism or for liberation from American slavery.

The Bible establishes that every believer is tasked with being a tremendous witness to the Gospel of Christ. This concept began with the Great Commission. Jesus instructed all believers in the book of Matthew 28:18-20 to share the Gospel into all the world proclaiming the works and teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ for the purpose of winning souls.

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."-Matthew 28:18-20¹

As cited in this passage, Jesus commands believers to spread the incarnational gospel truth of the resurrection of Christ.

Within this study, it will show some of the problems suggested as to why churches are not being planted in the black community. In this thesis, theological ideologies will be viewed such as Black Liberation Theology and the meaning for the black community. Has it caused the church to drift away from the mission of sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ effectively, as well as have shifted the thought process of planting churches?

¹ All Scripture citations are taken from the English Standard Version, unless otherwise noted.

Therefore the empirical question of this thesis is, why aren't black churches being planted and what are the problems as to why black churches aren't church planting? Are these problems systemic from bad theology? A question which will challenge the black church in America. This research will try to identify the gaps that are currently active in the church. So that a difference can be made and the church can respond to search for the moral compass of the black church, and make sure that its intentions are Jesus centered. Let's engage and begin with the history of the movement of the black church and investigate this study to understand and answer the question, why aren't black churches being planted and what are the problems as to why black churches aren't church planting.

CHAPTER ONE: FROM RECONSTRUCTION TO PENTECOSTALISM

The church has been an institution where blacks have faced challenges. Since the church's inception in America, blacks have encountered this tension and used it as a tool for defining their faith. A key paradigm was their mindset of liberation; especially through the transition of slavery, reconstruction and civil rights. It has often been noted that blacks were considered as the ultimate heathen with no hope. For the church to become a beacon of light, there must be hope. In order for blacks to accept Jesus as their personal savior and become members of the church, the gospel of Jesus Christ must transcend and send the message of this hope through salvation. For a slave to be introduced to this strong sense of hope they must first realize that they are deserving of rights and freedom.

For the slave that would mean equality in America which would unsettle whites as they believed blacks were objects rather than human beings. However, there were a certain group of blacks that opposed Christianity and couldn't find hope in the Gospel because of the church's portrayal of a Savior that was relatable only to whites. However, there were those who saw the future especially as it dealt with the church. Amongst those who paid attention to Christianity in America was the social scientist William Edward Bughart Du Bois. In a collection of essays from his book *The Souls of Black Folk*, he wrestled with the idea of Christianity and the mindset of blacks. W.E.B. Du Bois writes,

But back of this still broods silently the deep religious feeling of the real Negro heart, the stirring, unguided might of powerful human souls who have lost the guiding star of the past and seek in the great night a new religious ideal. Some day the Awakening will come, when the pent-up vigor of ten million souls shall sweep irresistibly toward the Goal, out of the Valley of the Shadow of Death, where all

that makes life worth living— Liberty, Justice, and Right— is marked "For White People Only."²

In the writings of Du Bois, he saw that the mindset was key for change in the status of slave to free. Booker T. Washington, author of *Up From Slavery: An Autobiography* chimes in on the mindset of black americans. That black americans should not allow race to prohibit them from having great success. Washington writes,

The individual who can do something that the world wants done will, in the end, make his way regardless of race. One man may go into a community prepared to supply the people there with an analysis of Greek sentences. The community may not at the time be prepared for, or feel the need of, Greek analysis, but it may feel its need of bricks and houses and wagons. If the man can supply the need for those, then, it will lead eventually to a demand for the first product, and with the demand will come the ability to appreciate it and to profit by it.³

Through this religious ideal, it showed promise to all who believe; a promise of salvation to be free from the ills of racism and slavery. This idea alone has really impacted the church. It produced that there is a light at the end of the tunnel.

These ideas would arise especially through the period of Reconstruction.

Originally, the Reconstruction era's initial intent was to radically reconstruct the United States of America in light of the Emancipation Proclamation which freed the slaves through the mandate of our 16th President, Abraham Lincoln. In an attempt to unite the Union and Confederacy, the goal was to reconstruct America so that it would provide promise and opportunity to all. However, this did not take place due to the death of President Lincoln and the succession of President Andrew Johnson. President Johnson

² W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2007), 93, Kindle.

³ Booker T. Washington, *Up from Slavery: An Autobiography*, (New York: Doubleday, Page and Company, 1901), 58-59, Kindle.

was a weak president whereas Lincoln was strong in leadership and making legislative mandates through the Federal Government for a constitution that suited the needs and provided equality for all people. During the course of President Johnson's term, the Radical Republicans were in charge through his weak leadership which contributed to states having more rights. This was beneficial to the long held Southern racial views of whites dominating blacks. To much surprise in the United States there was support and acquiescence by the Northerners which found Southern lifestyle palatable to the evolving culture of America. Because of the views tolerated in the South of "black codes" as well as the strong grip of Jim Crow.⁴ Due to "black codes" and Jim Crow laws, blacks becoming viable members of society was never fulfilled. Blacks still suffered the iniquities of skin color and never were considered equal regardless of the fact that they had their own institutions, but they never held the same value in comparison to white Americans. John Hope Franklin author of *From Slavery To Free A History of Negro Americans* provides a strong illustration of how blacks had a distinction from whites. This distinction was crucial to maintain the legitimacy of white supremacy. This practice allowed whites to be in control as they are considered the master race and blacks the sign and symbol of inferiority. Whites made sure this was felt so that they would have control and be dominant in America during this time. Franklin writes,

Inseparably connected with the problems of rebuilding the South and bringing it back into the Union was the question of the Negro. There was no dispute over the fact that he was in dire need, but there was serious doubt who could best serve his needs. There was no question of his status as a free man, but conflict arose over

⁴ Frank Freidel and Hugh Sidey. "Andrew Johnson 1865-1869." The White House Historical Association, posted 2006, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/about/presidents/andrewjohnson> (accessed August 1, 2011).

the possible distinctions between him and a white man. Even more serious was the problem of whether his status should be settled and his condition improved before the Southern states were permitted to return to the Union.⁵

During the South's return to the Union, they used intimidation and scare tactics to make blacks feel inferior as they still owned most of the resources. Different organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan began to arise with its mission to control and frighten blacks. These organizations flourished and inhibited blacks in their social statuses in America. The tactics were effective and key to using poverty over equality to keep blacks in the lowest part of society or from improving their socioeconomic conditions. White power was supposed to be the influential factor in America because they had control of the money, power and respect. For blacks any criticisms to surface, it challenged white Americans which was strongly disliked and dangerous. To alter or change their thought process of how blacks should be considered in this country became dangerous and radical. W.E.B. Du Bois criticizes these methods in his book *Black Reconstruction in America 1860-1880* as he observed whites trying to keep control in the South. Du Bois also observed Northern white leadership who encouraged white aristocracy so that everything began and ended with whites in America. The opinion of blacks would be heard but not necessarily taken into consideration, if it affected the dominant culture losing control.⁶

This was a systemic deception to suggest to blacks that they're valued but in all actuality they carry no value in American society. Reconstruction was the era of ultimate

⁵ John Hope Franklin, *From Slavery To Freedom, A History of Negro Americans* (New York: Vintage Books, 1947), 300.

⁶ W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America 1860-1880*, (New York: Free Press, 1998), 680.

deception as whites had themselves on a pedestal of being superior. And minorities (black) thought they carried value but in every bit of the word, did not. Because they were shut out of the dominant areas of society. The biggest lie to the black race was that America would be equal, fair and just. Reconstruction hurt blacks as it affected all areas of black society including the view of Christianity.

This failure that blacks felt caused them to view Christianity from a different lens and altered vision. During this era was a failure in providing upward mobility to blacks which posed a threat to everything that President Lincoln had fought to provide in society. A United States of America that would unite all types of people and make America just for all. W.E.B. Du Bois writes,

The attempt to make black men American citizens was in a certain sense all a failure, but a splendid failure. It did not fail where it was expected to fail. It was Athanasius contra mundum, with back to the wall, outnumbered ten to one, with all the wealth and all the opportunity, and all the world against him. And only in his hands and heart the consciousness of a great and just cause; fighting the battle of all the oppressed and despised humanity of every race and color, against the massed hirelings of Religion, Science, Education, Law and brute force.⁷

It was a necessity for the uprising of blacks. They realized that slavery is a mindset. This caused a chain reaction in the church as it was time for their own separate institution. In the primitive state of the black church, literacy was found through the Bible. A lot of blacks realized that their improvement was based on them becoming educated for their own good but also for their own safety. One thing that is noticeable was that many schools were founded right after the civil war, so that blacks could have equal rights no

⁷ W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America 1860-1880*, (New York: Free Press, 1998), 680.

matter what whites offered them in society.⁸ They did this through the black church. Therefore a lot of time was spent on blacks becoming educated in a tough time. But it is noticeable that blacks at a time did not have an enlightened attitude that would lead to their progress; they were focused on their white dominators rather than fighting for the state of blacks.

But for the success of this effort, blacks needed to have access to education and to educate others that need it in order to force upward mobility. It will cause blacks to be able to know who they are and who they are dealing with. And the issue on the hearts of most blacks, which is freedom and equal access. But this idea really impacted the church as it was seen that it would take an educated individual to make progress in society. Also to issue a mandate for a black church to be established that would meet the needs of nearly four million blacks in the world prior to and after slavery.

It was already conceived that blacks were under the curse of Ham when he exposed his father, Noah's drunkenness and nakedness in Genesis 9. However, the tribes of Shem and Japheth were blessed. This has even been equated to the location and people groups of the black Cushites according to the Bible. This was known throughout history that darker people were considered black. Through culture and mis interpretation of this passage, all blacks were supposed to be subservient as they had a curse from Noah on them that would never cease until the rapture. Blacks were seeking a theology that they could identify with that addressed being oppressed and marginalized. Therefore,

⁸ John Hope Franklin, *From Slavery To Freedom, A History of Negro Americans* (New York: Vintage Books, 1947), 382.

when the slaves became free, the religious arena began to evolve for them as the theory of slavery and oppression was forced to change.

The expansion of the black population provided blacks choices in practicing religious faith. This led to the creation of three major denominations which were the Methodists, Baptists and Pentecostals. These major denominations resulted in separate sects being founded for blacks since they were not allowed membership in churches that were controlled by the dominant white culture.

These three major denominations arose from the tension of the church dealing with freedom. They wanted to educate their black constituents and teach a theology that will show that blacks do have a future and America can be promising to them. Particularly, The African Methodist Episcopal Church and The Baptists were birthed for blacks to have independence and freedom.

The African Methodist Episcopal Church

The AME church was founded by Bishop Richard Allen. Richard was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on February 14, 1760, the slave of Benjamin Chew, a prominent lawyer and Chief Justice of the Commonwealth from 1774-1777. Benjamin Chew had between 40 to 60 enslaved workers on his Whitehall plantation in Kent County, Delaware. Chew also had a home in Society Hill in Philadelphia and another in Germantown, called Cliveden. In 1767 as he carried the name “Negro Richard”, he and his mother, father and three of his five siblings were sold to Delaware farmer Stokely Sturgis.

Allen's teenage years were spent working in Sturgis's fields planting flax, corn, and wheat. Sturgis eventually sold Allen's mother and three siblings in order to cover some major debts he owed. During this separation, Allen felt helpless and hopeless with the idea of freedom.

The year was 1777 in Delaware, Richard converted to Methodism after hearing a white Methodist preacher, Freeborn Garrettson take a stance against slavery. It was recorded that Allen was a devoted Christian as he always began and ended his days in prayer and was deeply devoted to this discipline. As a result of this way of life his love for Methodism grew, his desire to be free began to grow by leaps and bounds. Through this controversial and strong message, slave owner Sturgis changed his view of slavery. Therefore, he began to loosen his grip and belief in institutionalized slavery. As a result of this conversion, he allowed Richard alongside his brother to purchase their freedom for \$2000 each. Allen worked tirelessly for three and a half years and received his freedom at the age of 23.⁹

After the family's freedom was purchased, Richard found a purpose in having a last name and chose the name Allen. This would give him significance by him having his own. Following the name change, he changed his location back to Philadelphia. While there, he worked as a shoemaker and manager of a chimney sweeping company. As Allen moved back to his Philadelphia roots, he joined St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church where it was permitted for blacks and whites to worship together. They were also allowed to serve in very limited means. There, he became an assistant minister and

⁹ "Allen Enslaved." Historical Society of Pennsylvania, posted 2001, <http://hsp.org/history-online/exhibits/richard-allen-apostle-of-freedom/allen-enslaved> (accessed May 1, 2011).

conducted prayer meetings for blacks, but still there were limitations with the Methodist church with blacks. As a result in 1787, Allen departed St. George's to start an independent Methodist church where blacks would be able to contribute and lead.

Because of Allen's mindset and innate feelings, he alongside the famous Rev. Absalom Jones founded the Free African Society, a non-denominational religious mutual-aid society dedicated to helping the black community. Allen saw promise for blacks and decided to capitalize. In 1794, Allen and 10 other black Methodists founded The Bethel Church, a black Episcopal church meeting in an old blacksmith's shop. This area was a tremendous contribution to the Underground Railroad hiding slaves to flee for freedom as far north as Canada. Five years later through much fight and with the mindset of freedom in 1799, Allen became the first African American to become ordained in the ministry of the Methodist Episcopal Church. He worked extremely hard with a great victory in 1816, with support from representatives from other black Methodist churches. Richard Allen founded the first national black church in the United States, the African Methodist Episcopal Church, and became its first bishop.¹⁰

Richard S. Newman author of *Freedom's Prophet* argues that Richard Allen believed that God was for oppressed people. Later we learn that Allen was one of the main pioneers for Liberation Theology. This theology was strictly for oppressed people, especially, blacks using the story of Moses. Using the imagery of blacks being the Israelites and God delivering them from Egypt. Newman writes,

¹⁰ "Richard Allen Biography." The Biography.com Website, posted 2014, <http://www.biography.com/people/richard-allen-21056735?page=1> (accessed June 1, 2011).

His Christian moralism notwithstanding, Allen also helped define the meaning of liberation theology, the notion that God sided with oppressed people. In his first major statement on American bondage, penned in 1794, Allen reminded slaveholders that God almighty had obliterated unrepentant Egyptian slaveholders. As the story of Exodus foretold, the Lord would again wreak divine vengeance on recalcitrant American masters. “We do not wish to make you angry,” Allen argued, “but excite your attention to consider how hateful slavery is in the sight of that God who hath destroyed kings and princes for their oppression of slaves.” Emancipation and renunciation of racial superiority could, however, salvage one’s soul. But destroying slavery was only part of Allen’s liberation theology. A corollary came from Psalm 68: “Princes shall come out of Egypt,” Allen declared, and “Ethiopia shall stretch forth its hand to God.” Like other black founders and activists after him, Allen believed that Psalm 68 established a moral foundation for black freedom, including black citizenship in the American republic. Once freed from bondage—and the stigma of slavery—African Americans would redeem both themselves and the nation by emphasizing equality of the races. They would be the people on whom the great experiment in liberty depended, for African Americans would lead the charge against bondage. In this sense, Allen’s liberation theology offered not merely a warning to American slaveholders but hope: by embracing true Christianity, and liberating bondpeople, they could avert the terrible fate awaiting all sinners. But that fate would indeed come to those who ignored God’s sympathy with oppressed people.¹¹

Through this mindset, there was an emergence of church plants by and for blacks. This mindset had begun a new work for blacks as liberation theology began to spread fast with its incorporating factors of having all black networks that would connect with blacks globally. Through this movement in the 19th century, the African Methodist Episcopal Church grew to over 7500 members. Because of this influx of church growth and plants this movement substantially grew from 6,000 churches to 2 million. This statistic was taken during the early 1990’s, and presently the AME church has taken a major detour to decline. They have lost nearly half of their membership. According to Houston Chronicles journalist Richard Vara, the denomination has taken a major hit across the

¹¹ Richard S. Newman, *Freedom's Prophet*, (New York: NYU Press, 2008), 281-293, Kindle.

board as they are not meeting the needs of blacks in their communities. In fact, it can be argued that blacks are going to non-denominational churches.¹² This shows that blacks are not as moved by Liberation Theology. However Richard Allen can be attributed to being the catalyst for many black populated denominations.

The Black Baptists-National Baptist Convention, USA.

Richard Allen's contributions began to be seen in denominations apart from the AME, notably the Baptists through the National Baptist Convention, USA. Allen's contribution was so great as blacks saw the need for a change that impacted the society. This was a sign showing black independence in a culture that considered blacks to be dependent and deserved to be led by a superior race. This forced Americans to think differently of blacks as they learned that blacks were capable of the same dreams and aspirations as whites especially in the religious arena. The rise of black involvement in church leadership was a testament to the strength and fortitude of black people. They were prospectively a people of failure in the eyes of whites. However, there were some who were interested for the sake of dealing with slavery. This began with pioneers of the Black Baptist Movement such as famed slaves Nat Turner who sought to end freedom by any means necessary. Therefore the church became a place with an agenda to change the views of slaves and let them know there is access to freedom, somehow, some shape and some how. Therefore a code was used for freedom such as what is heard in Negro Spirituals for The Underground Railroad.

¹² Richard Vara. "AME Church convention will address decline in membership, school finances." The Houston Chronicle, posted July 23, 2005, <http://www.chron.com/life/houston-belief/article/AME-Church-convention-will-address-decline-in-1946669.php> (accessed August 2, 2011).

At one particular time whites thought that they should silence the Black Baptist Church and make them a branch of their own denominations in order to keep a grip on blacks. James M. Washington author of *The Origins and Emergence of Black Baptist Separatism* gave a report from church historian Miles Mark Fisher. Fisher reports,

After Nat Turner's insurrection in 1831 one must define anew a Negro Baptist Church. That movement sent hot hate back and wide consternation all over the Southland. Generally, what independence Negro churches had enjoyed was taken away. A revised black code was enacted...silencing...colored preachers. A [white] church...[and] association...would take a Negro church as a branch; and thus the independence of the Negro church was further postponed...¹³

Nat Turner embodied a grave fear that blacks would overcome slavery and uprising over the hatred of whites. They would be free. The Baptist Church was a key and integral part of this freedom.

As a result of the Great Awakening, whites did allow blacks to attend their churches which had to be white ruled. Or the other alternative was that blacks could congregate under white supervision and officiating. Blacks could not be preachers or active in proclaiming the Gospel as they were far off from the gospel as they were a cursed people.

Even though this was a carried belief, blacks were tolerated more so in the north than the south. Through this acceptance they allowed more blacks to participate as separate entities within churches where they can lead worship and have more of an active role as long as they practice the rules of that particular denomination. The north was more tolerant than the south for black churches, as the south was concerned about blacks

¹³ James M. Washington, *The Origins and Emergence of Black Baptist Separatism, 1863-1897*, (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms, 1983), 257.

being restricted in church leadership. Because of inequality there was a departure of blacks that happened during the Reconstruction era. There were still some blacks that used existing white denominations for the sake of evangelizing. This whole issue was centered around believing differently about slavery and the curse of Ham. The issue of slavery caused blacks to relocate to the West with all black Baptist associations and the shift began to evangelize to all blacks everywhere including mission work in Africa. As Black Baptists believe that blacks should recognize and see hope.

This hope was the initial starting point to focus on spreading the gospel through Christian Education in Africa. As blacks wanted to give back to the mother land and help other blacks. They were founded September 29, 1895 after there were nearly two million former slaves who attended Baptist churches. The same spirit of Richard Allen and the African Methodist Episcopal movement was lurking as they saw a specific need to have their own organization and churches. So on Wednesday, November 24, 1880, 151 messengers, representing eleven states throughout the United States, met at the First Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama and organized the Foreign Mission Baptist Convention of the United States. The Reverend W. H. Alpine of Alabama was nominated as the president. Through struggle there was an innate desire to see the oppressed freed especially in Africa but the only way to do this is proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ according to blacks. This was distinctively differently than the Gospel whites expressed. The National Baptist Convention, USA history states,

As a result of the mission, goal and ties to Africa for blacks, the Convention began to grow much more rapidly than expected. Six years later in 1886, 600 delegates from 17 states gathered at the First Baptist Church in St. Louis,

Missouri and formed the National Baptist Convention of America. Seven years later in 1893, the National Baptist Education Convention was formed. None of the three Conventions thrived separately. So in 1895, the three bodies effected a merger in a meeting held at the Friendship Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia.

The Reverend E. C. Morris from Little Rock, Arkansas was chosen as the president of this merged body. Prior to 1895, nine men served as president of the Convention. Since 1895, eight men have led this venerable Convention. Dr. Morris led for 28 years until 1922. During those years, a Publishing Board was established. At the direction of the Convention, the task was assigned to a Publishing Committee under the oversight of the Convention's Home Mission Board, led by the Reverend R. H. Boyd. Contentions developed around the issue of the independence of the Publishing Board. The Convention maintained that the Board was accountable to the Convention. The Board took an opposite posture. The disagreement led to a division in 1915, the Publishing Board and its supporters organized the National Baptist Convention of America unincorporated. The Convention incorporated as the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc. The incorporated body then established its own Publishing Board. It purchased land at 4th and Charlotte in downtown Nashville on the site once occupied by The Old Commercial Hotel. The Board erected a magnificent structure designed by the Negro architectural firm of McKissack & McKissack. The Building, when finished and furnished, was dedicated in 1926. Under Dr. Morris' leadership, the Baptist Young People's Union, the Women's Convention Auxiliary, the National Baptist Benefit Association and the Sunday School Congress were organized.¹⁴

Through this organization, even though there was tension there was resolve as they were focused on providing community through church life with evangelism. Throughout the whole history, they founded the ABT (American Baptist Theological Seminary) which has a profound effect on Black Baptists today. The mindset was to plant and provide liberation to blacks. Throughout this movement, they planted many of the Black Baptist churches that still stand today.

¹⁴ "History of the National Baptist Convention USA, Inc." The National Baptist Convention USA, Inc, <http://www.nationalbaptist.com/about-us/our-history/index.html> (accessed August 2, 2011).

There was a unique richness that has lost its potency in today's society. Therefore, there has been a great downsize in the amount of Black Baptist churches being planted. There is often the question, what was their faith based off? W.E. Du Bois writes about the two types of blacks when it comes to faith especially during the 19th century that is being perpetuated in the 21st century. He used location to prove his point as he was contextualizing his time. Du Bois justified the difference between the southern and northern black. He shares the simple fact that there is a shift in mindset. Du Bois writes,

To-day the young Negro of the South who would succeed cannot be frank and outspoken, honest and self-assertive, but rather he is daily tempted to be silent and wary, politic and sly; he must flatter and be pleasant, endure petty insults with a smile, shut his eyes to wrong; in too many cases he sees positive personal advantage in deception and lying. His real thoughts, his real aspirations, must be guarded in whispers; he must not criticise, he must not complain. Patience, humility, and adroitness must, in these growing black youth, replace impulse, manliness, and courage. With this sacrifice there is an economic opening, and perhaps peace and some prosperity. Without this there is riot, migration, or crime. Nor is this situation peculiar to the Southern United States, is it not rather the only method by which undeveloped races have gained the right to share modern culture? The price of culture is a Lie. On the other hand, in the North the tendency is to emphasize the radicalism of the Negro. Driven from his birthright in the South by a situation at which every fibre of his more outspoken and assertive nature revolts, he finds himself in a land where he can scarcely earn a decent living amid the harsh competition and the color discrimination. At the same time, through schools and periodicals, discussions and lectures, he is intellectually quickened and awakened.¹⁵

This is an accurate depiction of the mindset that predominated during this time period.

Yes, it still remains in the 21st century in the sense that there are number of problems that persist especially in the South. The southern model views the role of the slave for gaining social acceptance and not purely proclaiming the gospel. On the other hand, we

¹⁵ W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2007), 92, Kindle.

have the north which is focused on justice while missing out on the true gospel message. The main reason to convert is to become free from the ills of racism. It's a mindset that can water down the gospel. As wonderful as liberation is, it is not a theology in which Christ is glorified instead it is a mindset that depicts that freedom from institutional slavery is better than salvation, grace through the cross and eternal life. This is why it is important that when suffering one must have the right mindset of selfless and have servitude for the words of Christ, not a means of selfish self empowerment with the hope of eternal life. This mindset takes a toll on church planting and proclaiming the gospel to its societies members. Yes, justice and other things are important but not as important as the story of love through the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ. Through this sacrificial love, Satan and all his racial ills are defeated on the cross. Blacks don't always agree to this concept. Some embraced race and culture over the Gospel and believed that is how God operates. Booker T. Washington, a black social scientific genius rivals against the ideas of William Edward Bughart Du Bois and argues that we should not join hands with whites. In fact, there should be black institutions for blacks such as whites have for whites. We should accept society and build our own cities and communities. Rather than unify, keep it divided and empower blacks to live successfully within their own micro-communities. Washington also has a problem with the way the Gospel is proclaimed as he noticed during the Reconstruction era. Those blacks who learn how to read believed they were called to become preachers. In Washington's autobiography *Up From Slavery*, he writes,

The ministry was the profession that suffered most— and still suffers, though there has been great improvement— on account of not only ignorant but in many cases immoral men who claimed that they were "called to preach." In the earlier days of freedom almost every coloured man who learned to read would receive "a call to preach" within a few days after he began reading. At my home in West Virginia the process of being called to the ministry was a very interesting one. Usually the "call" came when the individual was sitting in church. Without warning the one called would fall upon the floor as if struck by a bullet, and would lie there for hours, speechless and motionless. Then the news would spread all through the neighborhood that this individual had received a "call." If he were inclined to resist the summons, he would fall or be made to fall a second or third time. In the end he always yielded to the call. While I wanted an education badly, I confess that in my youth I had a fear that when I had learned to read and write very well I would receive one of these "calls"; but, for some reason, my call never came. When we add the number of wholly ignorant men who preached or "exhorted" to that of those who possessed something of an education, it can be seen at a glance that the supply of ministers was large. In fact, some time ago I knew a certain church that had a total membership of about two hundred, and eighteen of that number were ministers.¹⁶

It is known that Black Baptists in particular embraced and believed W.E.B. Du Boise's agenda but they also promoted Washington's agenda especially through the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People). Washington calls out the mindset that is not purely focused on the Gospel. Instead trying to find a way to please the self through freedom and focusing on physical liberation.

Whereas preaching would not be focused on the gospel, but focused on a cultural gain. Mindset is very important as it will help or inhibit the gospel. The Black Church has severely malfunctioned due to bad theology and a corrupted mindset. The Black Church should base their convictions on Christ and then all others things will fall into the proper perspective and place. This includes liberation from the cowardly grip of racism.

¹⁶ Booker T. Washington, *Up from Slavery: An Autobiography*, (New York: Doubleday, Page and Company, 1901), 30-31, Kindle.

The Pentecostals-Church of God In Christ

But there were some churches focused on the Gospel and yet did not forget the struggle of racism. There was a great advancement within the black church during the Pentecostal movement through the Azusa Street Revival at the dawn of the 20th century. This movement was more focused on being charismatic and people being filled with the Holy Spirit. This was a practice of the doctrine of “sanctification” and “holiness” being essential to one with salvation through Jesus Christ. This religious identity came from Acts 2 when the apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit on Pentecost and this same power can be indwelt on the inside.

When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and hit filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested* on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues las the Spirit gave them utterance. -Acts 2:1-4

The Church of God in Christ is one of the biggest Pentecostal backgrounds known in the list of Black Churches. This movement has its beginning roots in the Second Great Awakening as the parents of the founder of the Church of God in Christ were converted on September 8, 1866 as former slaves on a farm outside of Memphis, Tennessee. They eventually became loyal to a local Missionary Baptist Church. In 1878, the Mason family migrated to Plumersville, Arkansas, where the founder Charles H. Mason converted in 1880. He then felt the call and became a Baptist licensed minister at the Mount Gale Missionary Baptist Church. While he was there he received birth to a new moment "sanctification" which would have him be dismissed from the local Baptist Church in

1895 because of his beliefs. As a result he became a traveling evangelist. This Baptist offense, the doctrine of sanctification calls for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

According to Historians C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya,

He became a Baptist minister who received his local license from the Mount Gale Missionary Baptist Church. Mason received his experience of "sanctification" in Preston, Arkansas, in 1893, and he also studied at the Arkansas Bible College. Dismissed from his Baptist church in Arkansas in 1895 because of his beliefs in sanctification, he continued preaching as an evangelist.¹⁷

There were others who held the same beliefs with Mason such as Rev. Charles Jones, a prominent minister of that time. They held revivals around 1896 with this same belief and all their Baptist cohorts and brethren began to close all their doors to Mason as he kept preaching about the doctrine of sanctification. As the Baptist doors closed, the movement began to experience a growth spurt as people started to follow this doctrine. This doctrine began to receive increased resistance throughout the denomination including the state headquarters in Lexington, Mississippi. As the Baptists disagreed highly with this doctrine, Mason and his group began to preach at the County Courthouse as it was open for Sundays for them. As they grew, they went from a home to an abandoned cotton gin house. These meetings were very successful and it was even recorded that 60 converts joined at one time to their fellowship.

However this religious movement did not come without serious setbacks. It was attacked by many groups including blacks who did not agree with what their doctrine of sanctification and saw fit to cause it to be shut down. But they persevered. As the year

¹⁷ C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiyah, *The Black Church in the African American Experience*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), 1110-1112, Kindle.

progressed they established and formed the Church of God, but the name later was changed to Church of God in Christ as they became an incorporated brand in 1897. Then they erected a building in 1906 and named it after a tremendous church planter in the Bible. The church was named St. Paul's Church of God in Christ. The name was claimed to be given from divine inspiration. Lincoln and Mamiya writes,

In 1897 when he returned to Lexington he found the doors of all the churches closed to him, so he preached from the south entrance of the county courthouse. After the space for worship services in the home of Brother John Lee proved inadequate because of growing numbers, the owner of an abandoned cotton-gin house, Dane Watson, allowed it to be used for services. Elder Mason was assisted in the cotton-gin house meetings by the Elders C. P. Jones and W. S. Pleasant. The revival meetings were highly successful and sixty converts became charter members of a Holiness church that Mason organized in Lexington. The meetings at the cotton-gin house were also interrupted by a pistol and shotgun attack where some members were wounded. This attack, presumably by other hostile black people in the Mississippi town has served as an example of the kind of persecution that early members faced. In succeeding years, as the membership steadily grew, a new building was erected in 1906 and named the St. Paul Church of God in Christ, the first church of the fledgling denomination.' Originally called the Church of God, the denomination was incorporated as the "Church of God in Christ" in Memphis in 1897. Mason claimed that the name was revealed to him while he was walking down the street in Little Rock.¹⁸

This movement was also impacted by the Azusa Street Revival in 1907 where people began to feel the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Now, Mason began to embrace the practice of speaking in tongues as his colleagues began to differ in the appearance of the Holy Spirit. As a result, there was a great split within the Church of Christ (Holiness) who did not embrace the speaking of tongues. Lincoln and Mamiya writes,

While in attendance at the Azusa Street Revival in 1907 for five weeks, Elders Mason, D. J. Young, and W. J. Jegter were baptized "with the Holy Ghost and

¹⁸ C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiyah, *The Black Church in the African American Experience*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), 1113-1120, Kindle.

fire," the practice of glossolalia, and later urged their church to embrace the doctrine and practice. Describing his experience at Azusa Street, Mason said: "The Spirit came upon the saints and upon me.... So there came a wave of glory into me, and all of my being was filled with the glory of the Lord.... When I opened my mouth to say Glory, a flame touched my tongue which ran down to me. My language changed and no word could I speak in my own tongue. Oh! I was filled with the Glory of the Lord. My soul was then satisfied."¹⁹ The General Assembly of COGIC was divided in its views of the legitimacy of the doctrine of the baptism of the Holy Ghost, however, with the majority rejecting it. Elder C. P. Jones assumed leadership of the non-Pentecostal faction, which subsequently became the Church of Christ (Holiness), U.S.A. Those accepting the practice of tongue-speaking continued to follow Mason, retaining the name, corporate status, and most of the property of the original body.¹⁹

Due to Mason being the founder, he was the ultimate authority to the Pentecostal movement. He was recorded as a man who transcended beyond race and was instrumental and the pioneer for most of the Pentecostal splits that had to deal with whites. Lincoln and Mayima writes,

Because COGIC was the sole incorporated Pentecostal body in existence from 1907 to 1914, it was also the only ecclesiastical authority to which independent white Pentecostal churches could appeal. Consequently, many white ministers were ordained by Mason and were officially designated as Church of God in Christ ministers. When the Pentecostal movement began to succumb to secular social sanctions mandating segregation, it was the men ordained by Mason who organized what has become the largest white Pentecostal denomination, the Assemblies of God, in 1914. The brief interracial period among black and white Pentecostals ended by 1924.²⁰

He actually began to follow a great model when it came to planting churches which resulted in a growth from the mid 1920's to the 1960's, from 50,000 to over 400,000. By way of Mason's Biblical model, he tried to become like the Apostle Paul as he was

¹⁹ C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiyah, *The Black Church in the African American Experience*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), 1121-1127, Kindle.

²⁰ C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiyah, *The Black Church in the African American Experience*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), 1131-1134, Kindle.

developing churches. He was also cultivating leadership and delegating responsibility as he saw the need of church planting to be resourceful and effective. We see this model especially in the Pauline Epistle that in order for churches to have and carry great responsibility they must first be structured with a framework that cultivates leaders and delegates responsibility. Then the church can focus on the community that it is called to serve. In its original form, Mason started the church in rural Mississippi but saw the need for cities. Because of the need, he planted and they were fulfilled. He saw tremendous growth that has had a lasting impact on cities such as New York, Philadelphia, Detroit and Chicago.

One of the leaders that were trained shares how Mason trained them as Paul and the other apostles had to even suffer for the name of the Lord. He wanted his leaders to take the Bible literally. Through the voice of a church planter that was shepherd by Bishop Mason, Mother Mangum Johnson reports for her husband, Elder William G. Johnson how hard it was but was thankful to be living out the text. In Lincoln's and Mayima book they share this account:

In one of the rare extant works available on the spread of COGIC mission churches during the urban migrations, Mother Mary Mangum Johnson reflected on the experiences that she and her husband, Elder William G. Johnson, encountered in migrating from Memphis to Detroit to begin the work of COGIC in the state of Michigan in 1914. In a letter, Elder Johnson wrote: We left Memphis, Tennessee, March 16, 1914 for Detroit Michigan. We began work among the Colored people. God gave me to rent a mission for Him. I paid my last eighteen dollars for it. I did not have the money to pay the man for moving, so I helped him to load the things, and I left trusting in the Lord to give me the money to pay him. So on my way to the mission, the people in the streets gave me enough money to pay him. Then we had nothing to eat. I borrowed twenty-five cents to buy supper and gave it to my wife. She asked me, "What are you going to do?" I replied, "I will do without." My wife then said, "I know it is the Lord, who makes you willing to suffer, praise His Name." She had one dollar, which I did not know she had, so she gave it to me. I bought food for us both, and we were

glad and happy that the Lord had counted us worthy to suffer for His Name, that other souls might be saved.²¹

C.H. Mason was a visionary leader who believed in training leaders and evangelizing through church planting. Mason was such a powerful leader that at one point in 1945 there was a church dedicated to him priced valued \$400,000. This was a strong indication of his leadership. This auditorium alone was the largest convention hall owned by any black religious group in the United States of America. This place was very famous as it was the last place where Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke before he was assassinated. Through his work, C.H. Mason also dealt with social issues but never fell away from the scriptures and maintained the purpose of the faith and church planting.

However on November 17, 1961 C.H. Mason died and many in the denomination felt like they were in the wilderness. The COGIC did not know which way to turn with this great movement. This time was known as the "Wilderness Wanderings." But through much prayer and scripture practice they found a new leader. But it must be noted that one of the struggles before the new leader was the power of the senior Bishop versus the power of the Executive Board. They were demonstratively serious about succession not going into the wrong hands because of the pride of power. They knew it would take a special person to lead this great organization. Therefore, the group drafted a constitution and gave offices which required a vote. This led to Mason being succeeded by his son in law and overseer of the state of Tennessee, Bishop James Olgathorpe Patterson, Sr. Through his leadership, the denomination grew to 3.7 million by 1989. After his death,

²¹ C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiyah, *The Black Church in the African American Experience*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), 1139-1147, Kindle.

J.O. Patterson's nephew, Bishop Gilbert Earl Patterson was elected leader and in 1997 they grew to 5.2 million through the doctrine of sanctification and repentance. Upon Bishop G.E. Patterson's death, Bishop Charles Blake was elected his successor and continues to hold that position. Under his leadership the denomination is still growing numerically.

The Church of God In Christ did church plant, however still had its flaws as it still dealt with a point of liberation theology through sanctification and holiness.

Methodism, Baptists, and Pentecostals provide a framework for all churches to be planting and spreading God's Word. This framework challenges the black church institutionally. In what ways has the church adhered to the guidelines set forth in the Bible and where has there been inconsistencies and failures to follow the Bible? Through this rich history, there should be identifiable markers that should be inspiration to the black community that the history of church planting has had a tremendous impact on the past and should continue into the future. Looking at the original historical narrative helps identify whether churches are following the biblical plan for the church.

The original historical foundation of the church was to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Historically, the principles of the church was founded by and for Christ. The church was promised when Jesus addressed Peter in Matthew 16:17, "And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock* I will build my church, and the gates of hell* shall not prevail against it."

Throughout this promise, it was fulfilled through His death and resurrection. Going forward into the book of Acts before the ascension of Christ, He promises to

release the Holy Spirit which would empower the Apostles to church plant. The first church plant was founded in Jerusalem as it was a key city because of its location. This was the area where Jesus completed His mission. It was also fitting as it was a diversified region. According to Acts 2:5-12,

Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. And they were amazed and astonished, saying, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.” And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” -Acts 2:5-12

The church began in an area where there was diversity but the focus was still proclaiming the Gospel that saves. The church began in 30 AD, and focused on the Jews initially from multiple locations and later sought the Gentiles in 40 AD.

According to the history of the church, it focused primarily on Christ. This church has a responsibility of gaining members of all people groups inclusive of blacks without social injustice interruptions. Throughout the history of the black church, all origins lead to contextualization more so than the gospel. The framework of the black church was for freedom from the injustice of racism. This alludes to what are the problems as to why black churches aren't being planted.

Church plant theology is very key to identifying these problems. In Chapter 2, further research will be provided on the theology of church planting.

CHAPTER TWO: THE THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK OF CHURCH PLANTING

What Is Church Planting?

Church planting is following the missional command of Jesus Christ. This is with the overall intention of establishing an organized body of believers. Some of the strategies of this process are evangelism, discipling new believers, cultivating leadership and organizing the body of believers. The missional command is evident in Matthew 28:18-20 and Mark 16:15-18. Jesus states,

And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”-Matthew 28:18-20

Mark 16:15 And he said to them, “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up serpents with their hands; and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover.”-Mark 16:15-18

And Christ promises the church to be missional in Acts 1:8 when the Holy Spirit falls on the Apostles. And Paul points out the importance of the church as they are to meet as a collected group to encourage and maintain habits of sharing the gospel per Jesus command. With this command, there are implications for church planting by multiplying to touch lives with the gospel.

There are strategies according to the definition of Missions International,

A simple, concise definition of a Church Planting Movement (CPM) is: a rapid and multiplicative increase of indigenous churches planting churches within a

given people group or population segment. There are several key components to this definition. The first is: rapid. As a movement, a Church Planting Movement occurs with rapid increases in new church starts. Saturation church planting over decades and even centuries is good, but doesn't qualify as a Church Planting Movement. Secondly, there is a multiplicative increase. This means that the increase in churches is not simply incremental growth, adding a few churches every year or so. Instead, it compounds with two churches becoming four, four churches becoming eight to 10 and so forth. Multiplicative increase is only possible when new churches are being started by the churches themselves rather than by professional church planters or missionaries. Finally, they are indigenous churches. This means they are generated from within rather than from without. This is not to say that the gospel is able to spring up intuitively within a people group. The gospel always enters a people group from the outside; this is the task of the missionary. However, in a Church Planting Movement the momentum quickly becomes indigenous so that the initiative and drive of the movement comes from within the people group rather than from outsiders.¹

This definition explains that church planting should start a domino affect as it is a larger work of missions. Looking at this history of church planting, it is rooted in the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20 which calls for disciple making through the symbolic practice of baptism. And then further in the Bible, baptism is further explained. Acts 2:41-47 states,

So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe* came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.-Acts 2:41-47

By way of baptism it causes baptism to carry more value as it reflects the embodiment into a corporate body of believers which carries values based on Biblical principles.

Church planting played a very important role as it created an environment for converts to

¹ David Garrison. "Church Planting Movements." Global Research, <http://public.imb.org/globalresearch/Pages/CPM.aspx> (accessed May 1, 2012).

Christianity. The church through a domino effect becomes missional as it not only focuses on a decision but the converts personal relationship in a corporate body.

What Is A Church Planter?

Based on the church being missional, the church planter must also be one who is missional. With the intentions of holding the Bible as authority and believing God to be sovereign. Within this theological framework, these concepts must never be compromised. Mark Dever, author of *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church* writes,

Today people believe to be true simply what they desire to be true. Long-held Christian beliefs about everything from the nature of God to morality have been reshaped and have become unimportant to many people. They have been jettisoned in the name of making Christianity more relevant, more palatable, more acceptable to today's hearer.²

Dever further expresses that the church is unhealthy as people are focusing on a postmodern culture rather than the nature of God. He even gives summary to the Bible.

Dever states,

We can summarize the main story line of the Bible simply under five words; this is what the Bible teaches us about God: that He is creating; that He is holy; that He is faithful; that He is loving; and that He is sovereign.³

He illustrates that theology must focus on God and who He is. He further writes,

This is the God of the Bible—the creating, holy, faithful, loving, sovereign God of the Bible. The Bible, in fact, is all about this God. It is about promises made by God and promises kept by God. And in the Bible God calls out for us to respond to Him by trusting in Him and His Word. In the Bible we see God giving us His Word—His promises—and we respond to Him by trusting Him—just as Adam and Eve did not do in the Garden of Eden; just as Jesus did throughout His life

² Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, (Wheaton, IL: Good News Publishers, 2004), 865-867, Kindle.

³ Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, (Wheaton, IL: Good News Publishers, 2004), 897-898, Kindle.

and especially in the Garden of Gethsemane. And as we hear and believe God's Word, we begin again to have that relationship with Him that He made us for. This is the God whom we can trust and should trust, because His Word will not disappoint. This is what the Bible is all about.⁴

The church planter is to be ardent believer. This person also endeavors in the gospel as its proclamation that calls for a response.

Darrin Patrick author of *Church Planter: The Man, the Message, the Mission* shares about such a response. He writes,

This declaration calls for a response. Because Jesus came into history, the gospel has a universal application—Christ is the way, the truth, and the life, the only means for humans to be forgiven and redeemed. It is literally good news for all peoples in all places and at all times. The gospel “identifies Christian faith as news that has significance for all people, indeed for the whole world, not merely as esoteric understanding or insight.” As Tim Keller writes, “So the gospel is news about what God has done in history to save us, rather than advice about what we must do to reach God. The gospel is news that Jesus’ life, death and resurrection in history have achieved our salvation. We do not achieve it, only accept it. Jesus does not just bring good news; he is the good news.” What is the appropriate response to such a message? It is not to speculate or debate or have a conversation. Because the gospel is revelation about what God has done in history, we must respond with faith, not uncertainty or conjecture. When we realize that the gospel is not a private but rather a public declaration of what God has done in history to draw near to us, we are enabled to respond in faith, believing that Jesus is Savior and Lord. The gospel is a different kind of message and therefore calls for a different kind of response. It is more of an address rather than just a simple communication. God is addressing us through the gospel and requires us to respond.⁵

Patrick shares the significance of the gospel as whenever its spoken it causes a reflection or response as it illustrates Christ victory on the cross.

⁴ Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, (Wheaton, IL: Good News Publishers, 2004), 1143-1149, Kindle.

⁵ Darrin Patrick, *Church Planter: The Man, the Message, the Mission* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 111-112, Kindle.

According to the story of Nicodemus, he was seen by Jesus at night as he was searching to understand the signs of Jesus in John 3:1-2. Nicodemus states, “Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus* by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.””

According to John 3:3-7, Jesus responds,

Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Nicodemus said to him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’-John 3:3-7

Jesus was sharing that no one will ever gain a full grasp of the gospel unless being born again or accepting him fully as the Messiah. This is evidenced further down in John 3:16-19,

For God so loved the world,* that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.-John 3:16-19

The church planter is to expect results with the gospel. According to Patrick as quotes

Tim Keller, the gospel is what causes change and new converts. Patrick writes,

What is the appropriate response to such a message? It is not to speculate or debate or have a conversation. Because the gospel is revelation about what God has done in history, we must respond with faith, not uncertainty or conjecture. When we realize that the gospel is not a private but rather a public declaration of what God has done in history to draw near to us, we are enabled to respond in

faith, believing that Jesus is Savior and Lord. The gospel is a different kind of message and therefore calls for a different kind of response. It is more of an address rather than just a simple communication. God is addressing us through the gospel and requires us to respond.⁶

Therefore, the gospel is a proclamation for the church planter which results in effective results. In looking at this proclamation of the gospel and results, contextualization is key to church planting for such a response. Tim Keller author of *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* explains contextualization in the light of understanding people, but not bending to the culture. He writes,

Contextualization is not — as is often argued — “giving people what they want to hear.” Rather, it is giving people the Bible’s answers, which they may not at all want to hear, to questions about life that people in their particular time and place are asking, in language and forms they can comprehend, and through appeals and arguments with force they can feel, even if they reject them. Sound contextualization means translating and adapting the communication and ministry of the gospel to a particular culture without compromising the essence and particulars of the gospel itself. The great missionary task is to express the gospel message to a new culture in a way that avoids making the message unnecessarily alien to that culture, yet without removing or obscuring the scandal and offense of biblical truth. A contextualized gospel is marked by clarity and attractiveness, and yet it still challenges sinners’ self-sufficiency and calls them to repentance. It adapts and connects to the culture, yet at the same time challenges and confronts it. If we fail to adapt to the culture or if we fail to challenge the culture — if we under- or overcontextualize — our ministry will be unfruitful because we have failed to contextualize well.⁷

Ed Stetzer author of *Planting Missional Churches* writes, “Relevance to the culture should never clash with the power of the gospel. There is much theological revisioning

⁶ Darrin Patrick, *Church Planter: The Man, the Message, the Mission* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 111-112, Kindle.

⁷ Timothy Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 2249-2258, Kindle.

right now; some people are, in the name of missional thinking, abandoning basic theological messages.”⁸

According to Keller and Stetzer, there is a great importance to proclaim the gospel in spite of the dominant culture. As it requires a focus to the end goal of building the church. Darrin Patrick writes,

Sadly, toughness and determination are often lacking in church planters and pastors. It is staggering to see the number of pastors who end up divorced and the number of seminary graduates who leave the ministry within the first five years. The average tenure for a pastor at a church is about three years (and less than two years for a youth pastor). While there are, of course, wonderful exceptions, the sad truth is that most pastors do not make it for the long haul. Great damage is done to a church when a pastor is undetermined and leaves it prematurely. Eugene Peterson compares this to raping the church: “Impatience, the refusal to endure, is to pastoral character what strip mining is to the land—a greedy rape of what can be gotten at the least cost, and then abandonment in search of another place to loot.” Often a pastor has the greatest impact on his church only after he has been there a number of years. When pastors fail to endure in ministry, they drastically cut short their impact. In many ways, your influence in ministry will only be as deep as your grace-empowered determination before God to persevere. If you are a pastor or church planter, you will face many moments where you are ready to tap out and give up the good fight. The questions are: How will you make it? Where will you find the strength to keep going? If you remain faithful in ministry over the long haul, it will not be because of your ambitions, your strength of will, or your desire not to let others down. Amidst the buffetings of ministry, these motivations will eventually wane. The only way you will endure in ministry is if you determine to do so through the prevailing power of the Holy Spirit. The unsexy reality of the pastorate is that it involves hard work—the heavy-lifting, curse-ridden, unyielding employment of your whole person for the sake of the church. Pastoral ministry requires dogged, unyielding determination, and determination can only come from one source—God himself.⁹

Therefore, the church planter must be one who is willing to be determined through faith in God that planting is the vocational call. The church planter must know the context in

⁸ Ed Stetzer, *Planting Missional Churches* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2006), 2, Kindle.

⁹ Darrin Patrick, *Church Planter: The Man, the Message, the Mission* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 93, Kindle.

which they will be serving through the gospel. Ed Stetzer identifies requirements for a church planter. He writes,

Certainty of call. The first is a certainty of call to church planting. In Ephesians 3:8, Paul wrote, “To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ” (NASB). In times of doubt, pain, and struggle, Paul could look back to a specific time of his calling. This certainty of being called to preach to the Gentiles reassured him in difficult times. In 1 Timothy 2:7 he wrote, “For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying) as a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth” (NASB). Call to a community, culture, or people group. Just as a call to the Gentiles compelled the apostle Paul, part of the planter's call is to a certain people. That call may be to the people of a specific community or a specific culture or demographic group. Extraordinary faith. Ridley mentions faith as a qualification equal with a dozen others, but it deserves much greater emphasis. The author of Hebrews wrote, “Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1, NASB). Though every pastor needs faith, the church planter needs extraordinary faith. Although the church does not exist and cannot be seen before it is started, the planter must possess the conviction that the new church is a reality; it will come into existence. The planter who does not have faith that God is planting a church through his efforts should not be a planter.¹⁰

Stetzer argues especially from the viewpoint that the plant must have extraordinary faith as one will be starting from phase one. But he also gives a list of those who are not church planters. He writes,

Many people plant churches for wrong reasons. Here are some inappropriate reasons:

- A strong desire to preach but no one will give you an opportunity
- Frustrated where you are because you can't do what you want to do
- Can't get an invitation to pastor an established church
- Out to prove something
- Need to get some experience—and church planting seems like a good opportunity to practice ministerial skills

¹⁰ Ed Stetzer, *Planting Missional Churches* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2006), 86-87, Kindle.

- Dreaming of a large ministry to boost your own reputation or ego¹¹

The church planter must be a man or woman of strong faith. However, Tim Keller finds the need for balance especially with being a church planter understanding contextualization. Keller writes,

But the main point here is that contextualizing the gospel in a culture must account for all these aspects . It does not mean merely changing someone's behavior, but someone's worldview. It does not mean adapting superficially — for example, in music and clothing. Culture affects every part of human life. It determines how decisions are made, how emotions are expressed, what is considered private and public, how the individual relates to the group, how social power is used, and how relationships, particularly between genders , generations, classes, and races, are conducted. Our culture gives distinct understandings of time, conflict resolution, problem solving, and even the way in which we reason. All these factors must be addressed when we seek to do gospel ministry. David Wells writes , “Contextualization is not merely a practical application of biblical doctrine but a translation of that doctrine into a conceptuality that meshes with the reality of the social structures and patterns of life dominant in our contemporary life.”¹²

Throughout the journey of the Apostle Paul, he knew he was called to be a church planter. This was evident on his journey on the road to Damascus. Paul also was an educated and well versed person who understood the culture. According to Acts 21 and 22, Paul gives a description of who he is which would certainly support that he is fluent in the Jewish and Greek culture as he understood the context. But he never fell more into culture than the gospel as he gives an account of his journey to Damascus. Acts 22:3 points out his ethnic heritage. Luke writes, “I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but

¹¹ Ed Stetzer, *Planting Missional Churches* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2006), 87, Kindle.

¹² Timothy Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 2287-2294, Kindle.

brought up in this city, educated at the feet of Gamaliel* according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God as all of you are this day.”

This journey Paul confirms the call as he is confronted by Christ during his journey to persecute the church. As pointed out by Darrin Patrick earlier stated, its God himself who calls and puts the burden for the church inside the church planter. Paul was a great selection as he understood the different people groups and culture. Looking into Acts 9 in depth points to the call of Paul as he was referred to as Saul, one who was dedicated to harming the church of Jesus Christ. As Paul was headed to Damascus, Jesus appears to Paul known as Saul. Acts 9:1-12 states,

But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. And falling to the ground he heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” And he said, “Who are you, Lord?” And he said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.” The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. Saul rose from the ground, and although his eyes were opened, he saw nothing. So they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank. Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, “Ananias.” And he said, “Here I am, Lord.” And the Lord said to him, “Rise and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul, for behold, he is praying, and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight.”-Acts 9:1-12

Shortly after Christ blinding Saul, He uses a believer to confirm his calling through the healing of his sight. Now its admitable that the believer did not want to believe due to Paul’s reputation prior to the transformation. Ananias was well aware of Paul’s past and couldn't really process the transformation. Jesus reminds Ananias the believer, that He is

capable of doing anything and everything according to His Will. The known factor is if one is willing to believe Jesus as Lord, things will change. Acts 9:10-20 states,

Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord." And the Lord said to him, "Rise and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul, for behold, he is praying, and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight." But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem. And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name." But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name." So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized; and taking food, he was strengthened. For some days he was with the disciples at Damascus. And immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God."-Acts 9:10-20

Paul was the chosen one to be able to aid in church planting and building that would cause the church to spread globally and inter-generationally.

Paul was called to do a work that was assigned to win the lost all over the world.

He began right away as in this very same chapter Paul speaks up about his encounter with Jesus. This was in light of the Jewish persecution of Jesus and His church. Acts 9:20-31 states,

And immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God." And all who heard him were amazed and said, "Is not this the man who made havoc in Jerusalem of those who called upon this name? And has he not come here for this purpose, to bring them bound before the chief priests?" But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Christ. When many days had passed, the Jews* plotted to kill him, but their plot became known to Saul. They were watching the gates day and night in order to kill him, but his disciples took him by night and let him down through an opening in the wall,* lowering him in a basket.

And when he had come to Jerusalem, he attempted to join the disciples. And they were all afraid of him, for they did not believe that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles and declared to them how on the road he had seen the Lord, who spoke to him, and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus. So he went in and out among them at Jerusalem, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord. And he spoke and disputed against the Hellenists.* But they were seeking to kill him. And when the brothers learned this, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus. So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied. -Acts 9:20-31

Byway of Paul's vocation, he began a method of church planting in which resources were provided. He also spent time cultivating leadership before sending them out to plant churches. In look at church planters, its key to be missional and understand contextualization. This causes effectiveness especially if this provokes a response through the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul was dedicated to this cause even if it meant that he must endure persecution for his personal belief in Christ.

To recap some previous points in identifying a church planter would be one who is a sole believer in Christ. They must be willing to lose everything to gain Christ as they have an innate desire by Him. It cannot be focused on other materials. They are to believe the authority of the Bible and take it as infallible and without error. They must also be missional in the sense of being evangelistic as well as develop an intentional faith community. The church planter must understand contextualization without compromise. The church planter understands the context of culture but will never compromise standards or regulations to cite with culture as it believes the gospel is universal to anyone who believes.

As a result of sharing this gospel, Paul was imprisoned according to Acts 28 where he spent many days. Because of Paul's zeal for the gospel, he finds even more joy proclaiming Jesus. Paul writes in the letter to Philippi,

I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from good will. The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. The former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment. What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice, for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. - Philippians 1:12-21

Again Paul is overjoyed with preaching the gospel even though some are not called to do so. This joy comes from persecution as the gospel is being spread further geographically, rapidly and aggressively. Even though, there were individuals preaching the gospel, Paul never lost his evangelistic and missional qualities. It helped again that he understood the context. Because Paul stuck these features, it caused the gospel to spread and the church planter to be successful. With the planter being aligned with these core values, it caused the cultivation of mentoring and sending the mentees out for the future cause of the church. This played a tremendous role all the way to the execution of Paul. Before Paul was executed, he left a signature to the church to keep preaching the gospel with an evangelistic and missional intent. As one should understand the context but never bend for culture to compromise Christ centered values. 2 Timothy 4:1-9 states,

I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound* teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing. Do your best to come to me soon. -2 Timothy 4:1-9

As Paul had a great vision from the Lord which would lead to his lifelong work of spreading the gospel. He never left the core values of being evangelistic in the light of winning souls to Christ as converts. He also showed that the church planter should be missional as it reaches people of all contexts and places. Paul also saw the need for contextualization. The opportunity to understand the culture while spreading the gospel of Christ. As culture is understood, it is not compromised with the culture as it may have a mixed message, other than the gospel.

The Pauline method shows how Paul viewed and planted churches. Paul had a very simple strategy which resulted into it being a multiplier. First, in Acts 16:9-12, Paul is going into the largest cities of the region. Acts 16:9-12 states,

And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." And when Paul* had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them. So, setting sail from Troas, we made a direct voyage to Samothrace, and the following day to Neapolis, and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the* district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. We remained in this city some days.-Acts 16:9-12

Paul would preach on a macro level which would bring the gospel into smaller locales or making it more of an opening on a micro level.

Secondly, he planted churches in each city and appointed elders in each area. According to Titus 1:5, “This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you...” Paul would do these two methods and expect the church to become multipliers. All from going to the largest region or the regions center as people would bring the gospel to their respected locations.

What The Church Plant Must Be

This affected what the church plant must become. Just as previously discussed with the church planter, the church plant itself must become missional. Ed Stetzer writes,

Missional is the posture—the way in church we approach people in culture—but incarnational describes what's actually happening. Just as Christ came to live among us, we dwell with the people around us. In many ways, we're like them. But we're changed, transformed; and because of that, we seek to change and transform. The concept of being incarnational as it relates to church planting emphasizes the importance of relationships in effective church planting. It's not about establishing a location for worship; it's about establishing a basis for coming together in the first place. Good church planting depends on good relationships.¹³

This missional intent even extends Matthew 28:18-20. Matthew 28:18-20 states,

And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”-Matthew 28:18-20

¹³ Ed Stetzer, *Planting Missional Churches* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2006), 2, Kindle.

The church plant has a responsibility to win souls to Christ and be involved in disciple making. Stetzer writes,

The goal of church planting is to reach people. They may be postmodern in their thinking, or they may be Korean or African American or young families or established professionals or counter-cultural or baby boomers or combinations of the above. In most cases they will be combinations. In North America today, we have such a rapidly growing and changing population that church planters can't afford to target such a specific niche that we miss one part of a mission field in favor of another. And that's the tricky part, understanding the complicated fabric our society is weaving without becoming overwhelmed. For no church planter can do it all. You may gain a better understanding of families than singles. You may adapt methods that appeal more to young professionals than to retirees. But by learning about the components of the mission field around you, reaching at least some of them as effectively as you can, adapting your approaches while remaining faithful to the gospel—all of this is missional.¹⁴

Stetzer argues that church planting from the beginning must be missional as it affects lives. Jesus' shares His intentions with the Apostles as His initial goal is to have churches planted around the world that would make a difference throughout the world according to His name. Acts 2 shows this call as this is the time of the birth of the church by way of the Holy Spirit. Jesus promised His spirit would come on the apostles in Acts 1. Acts 1:8 states, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." Acts 2 takes place and the church is birthed through the Holy Spirit falling in a very large region and people hearing the gospel in their native languages which would be unfamiliar by this particular group. Contextualization was key with the birth of the church as the Holy Spirit knew all contexts and culture. But it also had to do with the

¹⁴ Ed Stetzer, *Planting Missional Churches* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2006), 1, Kindle.

incarnation of Christ being present through the Holy Spirit. This gives meaning to what Paul shares about how to receive the conversion to Christ.

Paul writes in Romans 10:9-13,

“because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. For the Scripture says, “Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.” For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”-Romans 10:9-13

It shows that conversion begins with a mouth confession and heart belief. This passage illustrates for us that there is no distinction but is based on faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Trinity Jordan author of *Jesus Said Never To Plant Churches: And 12 More Things They Never Told Me About Church Planting* gives a description and definition of the term

“ekklēsia” which is important to the church. Jordan writes,

The word church is translated from the Greek word ekklēsia. The definition of this word in the Greek is most generally translated to mean any public assembly. Romans 16:5 states, “Greet also the church in their house.” Paul uses the word ekklēsia to refer to a gathering of followers of Jesus that met in a house church. This would be a very small group of people. Paul also used ekklēsia to refer to the followers of Jesus in an entire city (see 1 Corinthians 1:2 and 1 Thessalonians 1:1). Luke, the medical doctor who wrote both the Gospel of Luke and Acts, used the word ekklēsia to refer to the followers of Jesus in a region. He wrote, “So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up” (Acts 9:31). The last use of the word ekklēsia we see in the New Testament is again used by Paul to refer to the followers of Jesus throughout the entire world. Commonly referred to as the “church universal,” Paul wrote about how “Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her” (Ephesians 5:25). So the word ekklēsia, which we translate as church means a group of followers of Jesus all the way from those in a house church, those in a city, those in a region, to those in the world.¹⁵

¹⁵ Trinity Jordan, *Jesus Never Said to Plant Churches: And 12 More Things They Never Told Me About Church Planting* (Springfield, MO: Influence Resources, 2012), 337-351, Kindle.

The church was not only for the community but for the world. The church is supposed to be a place which understands culture but realizes the gospel is greater than the context. Contextualization is important but the gospel transcends beyond the context. The planter is called to learn contextualization which leads to the church plant. But the message transcends beyond to every culture every person whomever is willing to believe.

In looking at not bending for culture, Darrin Patrick writes,

Jesus was virtually indistinguishable from other men in his historical context. He wore the same clothes, ate the same food, and used the same language as the average first-century Jewish man. As Mark Driscoll puts it, “Jesus is the greatest missionary who ever lived or ever will live. In fact, Jesus’ incarnation was in many ways a mission trip led and empowered by God the Holy Spirit.” Because of this, Jesus’ ministry is the model for how we do mission. As Jesus contextualized, lived among people, and spoke their language, so must the church. “So there may be two kinds of churches. One kind says to its community: ‘You can come to us, learn our language, our interests, and meet our needs.’ The other kind says to its community: ‘We will come to you, learn your language, learn your interests, meet your needs.’ Which of these approaches imitates the incarnation?” Churches that imitate Jesus are those that are willing to incarnate the gospel by meeting people where they are.¹⁶

Patrick emphasizes that the church should be the place that knows how to be relatable but yet be empowered by the Holy Spirit. Ed Stetzer shares similar sentiments as he points out being relevant doesn’t mean selling out to culture more than the gospel. He writes, “Relevance to the culture should never clash with the power of the gospel.”¹⁷

Contextualization is very important, however the gospel is what really reflects to the church plant being successful.

¹⁶ Darrin Patrick, *Church Planter: The Man, the Message, the Mission* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 204, Kindle.

¹⁷ Ed Stetzer, *Planting Missional Churches* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2006), 2, Kindle.

As stated earlier in the life of a church planter, The Great Commission is quite important as it not only reflects evangelism but it correlates to the necessity of the church in Acts 2:41-47. It reflects to the importance of having a worship community that reinforces accountabilities and boundaries. These communities give a greater distinction than just winning souls to Christ. The church carries great importance as it helps with disciple making.

Through the church plant it reaches people. The church plant must be an organic naturalness to it from its implementation. Tim Keller points out in a sermon on church planting about natural church planting versus unnatural church planting. The naturalness of church planting is not a traumatic or unnatural event. Church planting is organic. This is shared as Paul's ministry in three phases: evangelism (Acts 14:21), incorporation into community (Acts 14:21a) and leadership development (Acts 14:22-23).¹⁸

In outlining the purpose of the church, it established its conquest to win the lost and make disciples. It is imperative that Christians win the lost. One may argue to simply share the faith when it should be more than this. There needs to be more church plants that service the community and cities. The Apostle Paul shows great theology as it deals with church planting.

Paul and his companions had two basic launching models for church planting in the entire book of Acts which were:

A) Planting Churches Individually

¹⁸ Timothy Keller, "Vision for Church Planting" (sermon, Redeemer City to City, New York, 2012).

B) Churches planting churches which contributed to the multiplicity of churches. For example would be places such as the church of Corinth.¹⁹

But in the naturalness of the church, it is unnatural to plant churches defiantly and reluctantly. Keller defines defiant church planting as, “some people in the church get frustrated and split away and form a new church.” And he explains reluctant as, “circumstances force the church leaders against their will to plant a new church.”²⁰

Natural church planting has to do with giving one’s life for the gospel. Keller gives three sub strata:

First, the ability to give away to lose control of money, members, and leaders.

- The gospel allows us not to be stingy with our human and material resources

Second, the ability to give up some control of the shape of the ministry itself

- Because we know that no one church or denomination has got it entirely figured out, we can hold our ministry approaches with both conviction and an open-hand
- A focus on the centrality of the gospel allows us to keep our focus on the essentials and to avoid unnecessary bickering over issues of style/opinion

Third, the ability to care for the kingdom even more than for your tribe.

- We see this in the way Paul talks of Apollos, who, though not a disciple of his (Acts 18:24ff.) Paul speaks of in the warmest terms (1 Cor. 3:6; 4:9; 16:12) even though his disciple evidently considered themselves a particular party (1 Cor. 1:12; 3:4)
- We see it in the way Paul (as said before) constantly takes his hands off new churches. 16:40—then he left. What we have here is a concern not for his own power or his party’s power (and even then, different apostles had their followers and emphases), but for the kingdom as a whole ²¹

¹⁹ Timothy Keller, “Vision for Church Planting” (sermon, Redeemer City to City, New York, 2012).

²⁰ Timothy Keller, “Vision for Church Planting” (sermon, Redeemer City to City, New York, 2012).

²¹ Timothy Keller, “Vision for Church Planting” (sermon, Redeemer City to City, New York, 2012).

If examined at depth, the ability to give away and to lose control of money and members and leaders. This is a true reflection that everything belongs to Christ. Secondly, the ability to give up some control of the shape of the ministry which would reflect a focus on the gospel where everyday delays are examined. Thirdly, the ability to care for the kingdom even more than your tribe is to always seek the good for the kingdom of God. This even extends itself to the idea of persecution in Christ. Matthew writes,

As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" And Jesus answered them, "See that no one leads you astray. For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and they will lead many astray. And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you dare not be alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are but the beginning of the birth pains. "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. -Matthew 24:3-9

Through the church's inception, we notice that Christ forewarns of the pain that will be encountered as the Gospel is to spread throughout the world. Christ knew that it will touch many lives through being missional as it will be spread throughout the world and there will be a strong hatred as result. When looking at planting churches, it must be noted that it branches authority to believers. Jesus sends believers to perform miracles signs and wonders so that it would be a tool which the power of Christ prevails. In order for the church to be missional, Christ must prevail. In Luke 10, we learn of the believers authority through the sending out the seventy two by two to exercise out demons. As Jesus allows them to see the power one possess going out in the name of Jesus is a reminder that Christ prevails and in order for the church to be successful, it must rely

fully on the power of Christ. This text begins as Jesus shares the location which is believed to be common to the place where he plants churches which is a land among wolves. Luke 10:1-5 states,

After this the Lord appointed seventy-two* others and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to go. And he said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. aTherefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. Go your way; behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves. -Luke 10:1-5

Not only is there an opportunity of seeing an atmosphere needing change but we see that Jesus wants the focus and has them go with nothing because He will provide everything. He sends them with the power of his name.

He reminds them that He possesses all that they will ever need. They need no money, no bags and they need to strictly focus on the job that is ahead of them. Luke 10:4 states, "Carry no moneybag, no knapsack, no sandals, and greet no one on the road." Jesus is reminding the church that if His gospel is proclaimed, it will grow and change the world. This is even proven as Jesus shares with His disciples about his hour to die forthcoming. In this story, he shares about how He must die in order that men could be lifted and have eternal security. The writer of John writes,

And Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him. "Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him." Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not mine. -John 12:23-30

In this passage, we see Christ sharing about a new day that will revolutionize the life of the believer. He uses the imagery of grain which shows us how the grain could last at least a thousand years and be useless as it stays in the granary. Due to it neither reproducing or being useful as food. It can only be useful when it goes into the ground and undergoes dissolution which suggests when it dissolves in the ground because of pressure being externally applied it is now deemed useful. Now it can produce grains by giving itself up. This conveys that the church and church planting is about, the sacrificial offering of Jesus Christ. The commentator B.W. Johnson writes in his commentary on this passage on the book of John,

This statement, prefaced by the verily, verily, that gives solemn emphasis, enforces a great truth. The grain of wheat may remain in the granary for a thousand years and be preserved, but it is useless there. It neither reproduces, nor is food. Grains were found in the wrappings of Egyptian mummies that were 4,000 years old, but they had never produced another grain. It is when it falls into the ground and undergoes dissolution, that it brings forth fruit. It is fruitful by *giving itself up*. So, too, Christ must give himself up. Must die, be placed in the ground, before he can be glorified and draw all men to him. His death was needful in order that he might impart life to the nations.²²

B.W. Johnson shows that Jesus' mission of death is very significant for new life and this process for the grain must happen.

John 12 creates the significance in uplifting Christ. It is particularly seen in verse 32 "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." In order for the plant to be in the right direction, it must be missional never diverging away from Jesus being the main idea but being natural in its intent that it is able touch the hearts of many cultures and generations. This gives incarnational value to the church plant.

²² Barton W. Johnson, *John: a Commentary for the People* (St. Louis, MO: Christian Publishing Company, 1886), n.p., Accordance.

Throughout this whole chapter, it is evident that church planting is following the missional command of Jesus Christ. This comes with the intention of establishing an intentional organized worship community. Whereas the end result is to win souls to Christ and make disciples. This missional behavior and intent extends itself to the church planter. The church planter is cultivating leaders and sending them while paying attention to contextualization so that there can be impact.

Contextualization for the church planter does not mean compromising the gospel. It means getting others to get to know the gospel from different environments. This happens through challenging with the gospel. The planter relies on the gospel proclamation as it evokes a response. However with this response, the planter must have great determination from God and they must plant churches from a natural and organic method not from defiance or reluctance. But being sure of the movement of God over their life. This movement goes into the actual church plant. There is a need for the church planter to be connected to the church plant by way of being missional, able to understand the context in the community in light of the gospel of Christ that does not compromise the value of Christ. This way the church plant is natural and can share purely the gospel which transcends all culture.

However, looking at the historical analysis of the origin and existence of the black church, there is noticeably a disconnect with churches being planted with the gospel than the culture. In fact, many churches were founded searching for liberation from American racism. This theology has created an idea that Christ is limited to a certain ethnic group. In chapter 3, we will examine Liberation Theology and its effects on the black

community per the theological framework of the black church. This will give perspective to the way the gospel is viewed in the light of culture.

CHAPTER THREE: THE CRIPPLING FACTOR: LIBERATION THEOLOGY AS BLACK THEOLOGY

One of the significant factors concerning church plants in the black community is the ideology of Liberation Theology. It labels blacks as oppressed and shows the world God's job is to strictly save black people which prevents believers from focusing on Christianity's eternal reward. Rather, it focuses on the hardships and injustices of this temporal existence.

Looking at liberation theology, you can either be liberated by Christ or liberated by culture. Through liberation theology people have been experiencing the latter, being influenced by culture rather than by Christ. There is a distinct difference as the church is not looking at the context of the culture but instead is worshiping the culture; rather than observing the culture and proclaiming the gospel of Christ. This has been a traumatic downfall for many blacks pertaining to liberation theology. Liberation theology has crippled the black church in so many facets. There are two common forms of liberation theology and in this chapter, we will investigate what liberation theology is and how it has crippled the black church.

The mission of Jesus Christ was to die and set the captives free. It can be seen through Jesus' bold declaration of why He came to preach. This idea of coming for a certain group of people was because we all were lost without the saving grace of Jesus Christ. Jesus said in Luke 4:18-19, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the

captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.”

Jesus came to save and liberate all those who are willing to be liberated through faith in the proclaimed truth of the gospel. However, this liberating theology has been tainted by looking at theology through the lens of culture rather than looking at culture through the lens of theology.

In the building of America's foundation the Bible was used as a means of saving those who were lost and inspiration to look for better business ventures. This country has a long lineage of pain and suffering through slavery. Slavery began in or around 1619 in Jamestown, Virginia according to John Rolfe who recorded that with the new immigrants came 20 black slaves. He writes, “About the late of August came in a Dutch man of ware that sold us Twenty Negars.”¹ He documents the apparent first arrival of slaves in the United States from Africa. Thus, while being in bondage, Christianity was a tool for blacks to find hope in Christ. As time has evolved however blacks have instead found hope through race which taints the view of faith in Jesus Christ. Consequently, blacks began to view themselves as Israelites and Moses would soon come to reality and they would find liberation.

A few of the most brilliant thinkers of liberation theology offer insight about what the whole idea of this liberation is. There is a strong component to liberation being about the human tradition rather than the gospel. In the truest human state it can be described as depending on the socio-economic state of one's life. So if a person is low income and

¹ Charles Johnson and Patricia Smith, *Africans in America, America's Journey Through Slavery* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1998), 37.

suffering terribly then it can be said that idea of theology is contingent purely on being liberated from that state. Gustavo Guterrez does a radical job in expressing this experience especially in Latin America and how they view liberation theology in terms of development. He writes,

The term development has synthesized the aspirations of poor peoples during the last few decades. Recently, however, it has become the object of severe criticism due both to the deficiencies of the development policies proposed to the poor countries to lead them out of their underdevelopment and also to the lack of concrete achievements of the interested governments. This is the reason why developmentalism (desarrollismo), a term derived from development (desarrollo), is now used in a pejorative sense, especially in Latin America.²

This idea of development is detrimental to those who look through this lens as one will not see the true Savior but rather a savior whose sole responsibility is to rescue one's followers from their socio-economical turmoil. He also adds:

In this light, to speak about the process of liberation begins to appear more appropriate and richer in human content' Liberation in fact expresses the inescapable moment of radical change which is foreign to the ordinary use of the term development. Only in the context of such a process can a policy of development be effectively implemented, have any real meaning, and avoid misleading formulations.³

This alone has been a solid danger to the Latin America as now they look for a Savior to fix their economic condition and not their souls. Throughout Guterrez's work on liberation theology, he allows the view of Latin America to be seen through the lens that liberation can be misguided by human desire. In fact, there must be a radical shift as there

² Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation: 15th Anniversary Edition* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), 16, Kindle.

³ Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation: 15th Anniversary Edition* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), 17, Kindle.

is focus on the wrong priorities. Culture can be the blind spot and cause one to not focus on the mission of Christ to deliver one from eternal damnation. Guterrez writes,

To conceive of history as a process of human liberation is to consider freedom as a historical conquest; it is to understand that the step from an abstract to a real freedom is not taken without a struggle against all the forces that oppress humankind, a struggle full of pitfalls, detours, and temptations to run away. The goal is not only better living conditions, a radical change of structures, a social revolution; it is much more: the continuous creation, never ending, of a new way to be human, a permanent cultural revolution.⁴

The human culture can cloud the necessity of eternal salvation. This concept allows goods and services to possess you all rather than one having goods and not harming the spiritual make up of one's soul. Through Guterrez's book, Liberation Theology we see that receiving salvation is true liberation.

He emphasizes at one point in the book the Apostle Paul and true liberation so that one will not be swayed and focus purely on the human condition through the lens of socio-economical values. In fact, Paul illustrates for us this liberation in Christ through Galatians 5:1, "For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery." With this concept, it is learned that Paul is speaking about eternal liberation. There is freedom from the wrath of God, therefore it allows one to experience heaven through faith in Jesus Christ. Martin Luther, a pioneer of the Reformation writes in detail about the idea of liberation as he gives clear distinction that Christ did not focus on civil liberties primarily but instead focused on liberty through

⁴ Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation: 15th Anniversary Edition* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), 21, Kindle.

redemption and the wrath of God. This liberty extends itself to the conscience and the state of the conscience. Luther writes,

Where is this liberty?

In the conscience.

Our conscience is free and quiet because it no longer has to fear the wrath of God. This is real liberty, compared with which every other kind of liberty is not worth mentioning. Who can adequately express the boon that comes to a person when he has the heart-assurance that God will nevermore be angry with him, but will forever be merciful to him for Christ's sake? This is indeed a marvelous liberty, to have the sovereign God for our Friend and Father who will defend, maintain, and save us in this life and in the life to come.

As an outgrowth of this liberty, we are at the same time free from the Law, sin, death, the power of the devil, hell, etc. Since the wrath of God has been assuaged by Christ no Law, sin, or death may now accuse and condemn us. These foes of ours will continue to frighten us, but not too much. The worth of our Christian liberty cannot be exaggerated. Our conscience must be trained to fall back on the freedom purchased for us by Christ...⁵

This liberty hinges on the great news of the gospel which one ascribes to with faith in Jesus Christ. Therefore, it brings an incarnational Christ into a context that needs liberation. This liberation extends itself through action as one seeks to please and obey Jesus Christ. Guiterrez argues that this liberation shows a newly defined love. A love which aids in solving problems, whereas it causes development through the lens of Christ which should always be the prevailing factor. He writes,

But St. Paul asserts not only that Christ liberated us; he also tells us that he did it in order that we might be free. Free for what? Free to love. "In the language of the Bible, writes Bonhoeffer, "freedom is not something man has for himself but something he has for others. . . . It is not a possession, a presence, an object, . . . but a relationship and nothing else. In truth, freedom is a relationship between two

⁵ Theodore Graehner, *Martin Luther, A Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians (1535)* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1949), n.p., Accordance.

persons. Being free means 'being free for the other,' because the other has bound me to him. Only in relationship with the other am I free" The freedom to which we are called presupposes the going out of oneself, the breaking down of our selfishness and of all the structures that support our selfishness; the foundation of this freedom is openness to others. The fullness of liberation—a free gift from Christ—is communion with God and with other human beings.⁶

This liberation affects the eternal state of one's soul. Looking at this even more closely, true liberation is a relationship with God. A power which shows that there is a meaningful value to life through a relationship which no one can ever destroy. This relationship dictates your ambitions, aspirations and destiny. This relationship challenges your stance within the culture.

Well what has happened to the black church? The black church shares similar characteristics with the Latin American church as it focuses on the economic condition. Should the church provide for the needs of its congregants? However, where is the need being resourced from? Is it being sourced from one's relationship with God and His ability to supply all our needs or is being sourced from one's pride and arrogance? This can be argued that it depends on the praxis as suggested by Sigmund Freud and Karl Marx which determines the means of what the playing field for one to understand liberation whether it gives meaning or value. Jose Miguez Bonino questions the idea of this interpretation as one must examine the idea of how to define theology especially in the light of liberation. Bonino writes,

Every interpretation of the texts which is offered to us (whether as exegesis or as systematic or as ethical interpretation) must be investigated in relation to the praxis out of which it comes. At this point the instruments created by the two

⁶ Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation: 15th Anniversary Edition* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), 24, Kindle.

modern masters in art of “suspecting,” namely Freud and Marx, are of great significance. Very concretely, we cannot receive the theological interpretation coming from rich without suspecting it and, therefore, asking what kind of praxis it supports, reflects, or legitimizes. Why is it, for instance, that the obvious political motifs and undertones in the life of Jesus have so hidden to liberal interpreters until very recently?⁷

James Cone, a scholar to the black liberation theology movement really breaks down the elements of how blacks view liberation theology. He shows that racial oppression is the face of liberation. As with American history, we acknowledge that this country has a long line of racism. Per chapter 1 of this thesis, there is a long litany of the history of the black church and racism. Christianity was structured in America with the use of slavery. This structure has given the value of Christianity and the church as a Euro-American liberty where Jesus loves all people but advancement is only for whites. Cone shares,

Unfortunately, American white theology has not been involved in the struggle for black liberation. It has been basically a theology of the white oppressor, giving religious sanction to the genocide of Amerindians and the enslavement of Africans. From the very beginning to the present day, American white theological thought has been “patriotic,” either by defining the theological task independently of black suffering (the liberal northern approach) or by defining Christianity as compatible with white racism (the conservative southern approach). In both cases theology becomes a servant of the state, and that can only mean death to blacks. It is little wonder that an increasing number of black religionists are finding it difficult to be black and be identified with traditional theological thought forms.⁸

Because of such a rich history of hate, blacks have searched for the meaning of Jesus.

This meaning has looked differently because of the racial injustice in America. Through

⁷ Jose Miguez Bonino, *Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1975), 90.

⁸ James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation - Fortieth Anniversary Edition* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010), 4-5, Kindle.

this idea of white Christianity, Jesus can be interpreted as a liberator in the black struggle of racial injustice. Cone writes,

The task of black theology, then, is to analyze the nature of the gospel of Jesus Christ in the light of oppressed blacks so they will see the gospel as inseparable from their humiliated condition, and as bestowing on them the necessary power to break the chains of oppression. This means that it is a theology of and for the black community, seeking to interpret the religious dimensions of the forces of liberation in that community.⁹

Black theology is supposed to contextualize theology for the black race in spite of their oppression. Cone suggests that this black theology brings meaning to the struggle as Jesus is married to such a struggle. This struggle is to be handled through understanding the Gospel through the lens of culture. Literally, this theology is not particularly a study of God, instead its about the hand of God and Him ultimately liberating the oppressed eternally.

Cone writes,

In view of the biblical emphasis on liberation, it seems not only appropriate but necessary to define the Christian community as the community of the oppressed which joins Jesus Christ in his fight for the liberation of humankind. The task of theology, then, is to explicate the meaning of God's liberating activity so that those who labor under enslaving powers will see that the forces of liberation are the very activity of God. Christian theology is never just a rational study of the being of God. Rather it is a study of God's liberating activity in the world, God's activity in behalf of the oppressed.¹⁰

⁹ James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation - Fortieth Anniversary Edition* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010), 5, Kindle.

¹⁰ James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation - Fortieth Anniversary Edition* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010), 3, Kindle.

This is evidenced in black preaching as many have seen it to benefit a recent struggle rather than alone it representing a prophetic end time movement. Henry H. Mitchell an expert on black preaching writes,

The Black preacher is more likely to think of the Bible as an inexhaustible source of good preaching material than as inert doctrinal and ethical authority. He sees it as full of insights—warm and wise and relevant to the everyday problems of a Black man. It provides the basis for unlimited creativity in the telling of rich and interesting stories, and these narrations command rapt attention while the eternal truth is brought to bear on the Black experience and the struggle for liberation. The Bible undergirds remembrance and gives permanent reference to whatever illuminating discernment the preacher has to offer. The Black preacher does not merely use the Bible. At his best he lets the Bible use him. His intuitively flexible approach to the Bible leads him to ask, “What is the Lord trying to tell me today in the passage of scripture?” Or, “What answer for today’s need does the whole sweep of the New Testament give?” And, “How may I see it and tell it in the language my people understand?” The Black preacher is not addicted to pat, legalistic or literalistic answers. They do not work for him.¹¹

Looking alone at the method of preaching, it is noticeable that the preacher looks in depth at the system versus Christ. Eyes are pruned open by the black community through trying to express the Biblical truth of Jesus being involved in fighting the struggle of racism. Mitchell furthers his discussion to even the makeup of Jesus Christ of whether or not, he is a black man. He identifies that black preaching has to have the elements of Jesus being black so that people will know that Christ is relatable to them as a people. He forms a strong opinion about the ideas of illustrations as it helps the hermeneutical interpretation of the text. Mitchell writes,

A less directly imaginative aspect of Black preaching is the choice of illustrations—modern parallels to the biblical text. In the process of making the point clear, the Black experience is lifted up and celebrated, and identity is enhanced. It is just as frustrating to the religious growth of Black people to use illustrations our

¹¹ Henry Mitchell, *Black Preaching* (Philadelphia, PA: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1970), 113-114.

of white middle-class life as it is destructive of Black children's reading skills to do all their reading in middle-class "Dick and Jane" books. The Black hermeneutic task is to interpret the gospel in terms that are readily grasped and quickly identified with.¹²

This reality has a real affect on blacks, even today. Olin P. Moyd, another great mind, writes in his book *Redemption in Black Theology* about the experience and black thought as it relates purely to the idea of redemption. He also quotes James D. Tymes about the idea of this view as it can reverse racism in the light of religion. Tymes uses his particular ideas to explain why liberation theology can be damaging to black people. Tymes' response to Dr. Henry Nelson Wieman was key for this particular view. Moyd writes,

In his book, *The Rise of Religious Education Among Negro Baptists*, Tymes addresses himself to these three questions about redemption which were put by

Dr. Henry Nelson Wieman:

What is the evil from which man needs to be saved?

What is the good to which he can be saved?

What are the conditions which must be met before this saving power can operate properly?¹³

He begins by questioning how can saving power work effectively in the life of blacks and carry strong value. Therefore, the idea of context and culture over the Gospel is pushed.

Moyd continues,

His answers, he says, are from the perspective of religious education among "Negro" Baptists. His response to the first questions is the the "Negroes" have in the past and still need to be saved from those pathological influences if the social process which tend to reduce them to subhuman status in society. They need to be saved from the "psychology of unconscious self-hatred" which tends to rob them of the creativity needed for the emergence of an approved self-image. "Negroes"

¹² Henry Mitchell, *Black Preaching* (Philadelphia, PA: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1970), 127.

¹³ Olin P. Moyd, *Redemption in Black Theology* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1979), 57.

also need to be saved from the “demoralizing effects of second-class citizenship” which limits cultural enhancement and spiritual fulfillment. Tynes does not see the evil from which Black people ought to be saved only from the lopsided view of sin and guilt. Blacks need to be saved from all of the evils which rob them of their creativity.¹⁴

So this concept becomes an idea that strays away from any type of suffering carrying value. Instead, it focuses on slavery as one is being robbed of physical freedom.

Therefore, the chief focus is physical freedom as we are the judges of others wrong by judging those that have wronged us. Moyd continues,

“The good to which the Negro needs to be saved,” says Tynes, ...is a deep sense of self acceptance, a transforming and transcending self-image, ... a sense of self-esteem—worthship—a basic requirement for high moral conduct, ethical character, and high ideals in the upswing of personal development.” The conditions which must be met before the saving power can operate effectively have two foci, according to Tynes. The first has to do with the general secular acculturating processes and agents, that is, the home, school, church, etc., plus the conditions of economics in the process of human development. The institutions must reflect an “unqualified commitment to the centrally great ideals which undergird the democratic philosophy of life.” And the second focus has to do with a dynamic religious experience.¹⁵

This affects the personal development of a black man or black woman. Within this idea, salvation is only looked upon as receiving all physical liberties. So one might suggest that if you are not free then salvation has not been received. Moyd criticizes this philosophy when he writes,

One point which was made clear from the research and report in this chapter is that Hebrew witnesses and theologians have understood redemption to be both this-worldly as well as otherworldly. Redemption means salvation from oppression as well as salvation from sin and guilt. It has also been discovered that Western, Christian theologians were also aware of the this-worldly emphasis of

¹⁴ Olin P. Moyd, *Redemption in Black Theology* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1979), 57.

¹⁵ Olin P. Moyd, *Redemption in Black Theology* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1979), 57.

redemption in the Old Testament. But Western, Christian theologians in general have elected to participate in a cult which emphasizes only the otherworldly dimension of redemption...¹⁶

Looking into Moyd's work, he addresses what most black liberation theologians do which is only scope and engage with other blacks never exposing themselves to a new level of diversity which could change the way the church is viewed. Race and the suffering it can bring is the prominent factor over Christ in the way black liberation theology is shaped. Black liberation theology has made itself a black theology or the theology of black folks.

Black Liberation has been the soul for many disadvantaged blacks especially in light of the error of slavery onward to freedom. Albert Cleage, Jr.'s, Black Christian Nationalism there is strong emphasis for this movement to help enlighten blacks to become apart of something that will shape and evolve how they look at themselves in society in order to climb the ladder to economic empowerment.

Cleage expresses his thoughts about a black revolution which would heavily incorporate the church. Cleage writes,

We begin with the basic premise that the Black church is essential to the Liberation Struggle, because it is controlled by Black people and is capable of being reconstructed to serve the Black Revolution. We also assume that a Black Revolution is impossible unless Black people are able to build an entire system of counterinstitutions, created and designed to serve the interests of Black people as all American institutions now serve the white-supremacy interests of white America. To build a system of counterinstitutions we must first build one basic Black institution which has the acceptance of the masses of Black people, facilities and economic stability not directly dependent on the hostile white world,

¹⁶ Olin P. Moyd, *Redemption in Black Theology* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1979), 58-59.

and the capacity to spin off all the other institutions needed for the establishment of a Black Nation within a nation.¹⁷

According to Cleage, there is a strategic need to reduce the whitenization of Christianity as far as whites have dominated the faith. There is a strong call for blacks to personalize the faith by associating its roots with its people. These roots even are an extension to the way Jesus is viewed culturally amongst black people. Cleage argues for the concept of Jesus being a black man. He writes,

Historically Christianity is a Black man's religion created out of the experiences of Black people in Africa. This is not to say that Christianity was the one and only Black man's religion. It was the religion of small, numerically insignificant, mongrel tribe of nomads who wandered for centuries mixing, intermingling and intermarrying with all the peoples of Africa and the Fertile Crescent. They were a Black people racially, culturally, and religiously...¹⁸

Christianity is viewed as a mere religion. Within it religious qualities the component of relationship is not stressed adequately therefore Christianity is a form of idolatry. It is used in many ways just to promote a cause. Cleage argues for blacks to embody this person of Christ in order to begin a revolution of empowerment by black people. He writes,

The revolutionary teachings of the Black Messiah commit us to revolution and Nation building. Today our task is clear. We must free the Black church from slave Christianity and call it back to the original teachings of Jesus, and we must liberate the Black church as an institution and restructure it so that it can become the center of Black Liberation Struggle...¹⁹

¹⁷ Albert B. Cleage, *Black Christian Nationalism New Directions For The Black Church* (New York: William Morrow & Company, 1987), 173-174.

¹⁸ Albert B. Cleage, *Black Christian Nationalism New Directions For The Black Church* (New York: William Morrow & Company, 1987), 174-175.

¹⁹ Albert B. Cleage, *Black Christian Nationalism New Directions For The Black Church* (New York: William Morrow & Company, 1987), 175-176.

These ideas such as from Cleage shows the structure of American politics and policy. He argues that this country was built for whites and anything to tear away from the concept of living breeds contempt. The church is really important as it sets claim or position in a world which was made to manipulate blacks because everything was developed for whites. The church is another avenue which searches for its meaning through power. He writes,

The Black church is a white institution ministering to Black people with no awareness of the fact that it is not a part of the white church and that it must lead Black people in a liberation struggle for power. So the existing Black church proceeds to preach, teach, and program as though Black people are a part of the white man's system. Look at any Black church you know think back to the ones you grew up in. Ninety-nine percent of everything they do is predicated upon the proposition that we live in a world in which white and Black people share power, justice, freedom and opportunity equally. So the whole program of the Black church is unrealistic...²⁰

In Cleage's commentary, its learned that the black church of America is nothing but a subset of the white church. In it, it copies the forms not to liberate but to make captive the black church.

As a result, Cleage calls on a new enlightenment for liberation in theology within the black church as a result of the continuous black struggle. The church is a necessary component in order for such a work to be done. He writes,

The first task of the Black church is to liberate the Black man's mind. It must be willing to deal with truth and stop telling fairy tales to men and women. If the Black church is to move in new directions it must learn the nature of reality and become committed to truth. The Black church must become a teaching church. It cannot be a church that says what people want to hear. It must help Black people

²⁰ Albert B. Cleage, *Black Christian Nationalism New Directions For The Black Church* (New York: William Morrow & Company, 1987), 181.

begin to think realistically about everyday problems. This is the process by which we will move from a gospel of salvation to a gospel of liberation...²¹

Cleage searches for empowerment through the gospel of liberation but he also looks through the lens of organization and structure as it's key for there to be a structure that promotes separatism and an escape from the ills of white America. Cleage writes,

Then we must put together the organization and structure to make it effective. We must learn to deal with individuals. We seek to bring all Black people together in one Black Nation so that we can struggle together for liberation. We will not all start at the same stage of development; some of us will be emancipated from our white identification than others. But no prized will be given for the kind of individualistic personal pride and arrogance which uses a little knowledge to destroy the unity of a group. The submergence of intellectual pride is difficult, but the individual who uses his knowledge and skills to destroy the Nation and treated as a Gentile. The Nation must become a group working, thinking, and planning together. One of our basic problems is the development of a process which will make this possible.²²

Black liberation points its finger back to black solidarity, separatism and to a black revolution. In Cleage's thoughts, its noted that blacks must find freedom through breaking away and championing the black struggle. He writes,

We must deliberately reject the values and thought patterns of the white Western world. We must consciously create a new Black mentality and value system which recognizes the equal worth of every Black brother and sister. This will be the power of the Black Nation, and nothing can be permitted to relegate it to a secondary position.

Black unity must mean that we are willing bear with one another's weaknesses and share with one another ideas as well as dollars. The new Black church will not ask for faith in Jesus, a mystical Saviour, but for faith in one another and

²¹ Albert B. Cleage, *Black Christian Nationalism New Directions For The Black Church* (New York: William Morrow & Company, 1987), 189.

²² Albert B. Cleage, *Black Christian Nationalism New Directions For The Black Church* (New York: William Morrow & Company, 1987), 189-190.

commitment to walk in the footsteps of Jesus, as we join in the Black Liberation Struggle as defined by the Black Christian Nationalist Movement.²³

Cleage argues for more economic empowerment using the church as an avenue rather than a saving point with faith in Jesus Christ. There are many other divergent views such as James Cone's, another expert in the liberation theology movement. Cone even explains that blacks struggle in light of this Gospel of Christ. He wants those who use theology use it properly in the light of ethnicity and culture especially blacks in America. Within Cleage's framework, he sums up that the origin and location of the race of Jews is important because they were black. Olin Moyd points to the fact that Cleage is accurate because of the origin of the Jews. Cleage even challenges the hymn 'Fairest Lord Jesus' and instead refers to it being as 'Darkest Lord Jesus.' Moyd writes, "Cleage argues that it was through the Hebraic genealogy that we received the historical Jesus and that we might sing "Darkest Lord Jesus" because an inherited anatomical characteristic of the Hebrew people was darkskin."²⁴ Moyd shows empirical evidence as to why Cleage comes to the conclusion that the Messiah was black. Moyd writes,

Cleage begins with Abraham, the father of the Israelite nation, and points out that the father of Abraham was a Chaldean. Answering the call of God, Abraham was left his city and, for a time, lived in Egypt. In Egypt, he dwelt with the Egyptians, says Cleage, where the extant Sphinx, drawings, and inscriptions attest to the fact that the Egyptians were Black people. It was among the Egyptians that the people of Israel had their early beginnings, although they were not yet considered a nation. That Abraham took Hagar, his Egyptian servant, as a second wife and had children with her a biblical fact. The son of Abraham and Hagar, Ishmael,

²³ Albert B. Cleage, *Black Christian Nationalism New Directions For The Black Church* (New York: William Morrow & Company, 1987), 190.

²⁴ Albert B. Cleage, *Black Christian Nationalism New Directions For The Black Church* (New York: William Morrow & Company, 1987), 190.

became the father of the Ishmaelites, but we must that they sprang from a single father.

Moses, says Cleage, was half Egyptian and half Jewish, which made him unquestionably nonwhite. He married a Midianite woman (not a Hebrew woman), and they had children. The Hebrews came from among the Chaldeans, mixed with the Egyptians, the Midianites, and the Canaanites. Thus, the conclusion that the nation, Israel, was nonwhite.²⁵

As Olin Moyd points to this historical evidence of the origin of such people, then he deems it acceptable to believe that Jesus and the Jewish community began as a black civilization. Thus, having the stamp of approval to identify Jesus as black and that he is a product of an oppressed people. J. Deotis Roberts, Sr. finds that this model helps black people discover and meet Jesus because they can identify with Jesus Christ a lot more because of what He looked like. He writes,

A symbol participates in that which it symbolizes while it also points beyond itself as a mere symbol. Against this assertion we may make certain affirmation. The black Christ participates in the black experience. In some sense Christ makes contact with what the black Christian is aware of in his unique history and personal experience. He encounters Christ in that experience and is confronted by the claims of Christ also in his black experience.²⁶

This identity and oppression fits quite comfortably with the idea of liberation theology. Roberts among many others saw this as a necessary cause in order for Christ to have a tremendous impact in the life of blacks. It causes one's faith to be personalized knowing that someone has an identical ethnic makeup.

The black struggle is a key part of liberation theology, as the struggle is a determining factor in the sense of salvation. Within this struggle it really defines the

²⁵ Olin P. Moyd, *Redemption in Black Theology* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1979), 137.

²⁶ J. Deotis Roberts, *Liberation and Reconciliation* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 2005), 139.

Christian theologian in the lines of valuing such a struggle within the framework of the Gospel. Cone writes,

The Christian theologian, therefore, is one whose hermeneutical consciousness for an interpretation of the gospel is defined by the oppressed people's struggle of freedom, seeking to adhere to the delicate balance of social existence and divine revelation. In this situation, the theologian must accept the burden and the risk laid upon him by both social existence and divine revelation, realizing that they must be approached dialectically, and thus their exact relationship cannot be solved once and for all time...²⁷

Cone continues on.

Thus the source of the distinction between the oppressed and the oppressors, the elected and the excluded, is not a body of rational principles derived from human experience but is, rather, God, the Creator and Redeemer of human life. The identification of the story of liberation with God's story, which troubles my critics, is not derived from the human situation. Christian theology does not move from human needs to God, but from God's revelation to our needs...²⁸

Cone and many others have allowed black liberation theology to become a form of black nationalism. In fact, Thabiti M. Anyabwile author of *The Decline of African American Theology From Biblical Faith to Cultural Captivity* writes on this idea which is presented for the black church and challenges the shallowness of it. Anyabwile writes about this concept first having strong roots within Marcus Garvey's concept of race and religion. As history evolved the sight and understanding of God changed as blacks were climbing up the mobility ladder. In addition certain liberties were staring to be part of American society. During this evolution, the view of God changes also. This is seen through the ways Garvey looked at the triune God,

²⁷ James H. Cone, *God of The Oppressed* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1975), 98.

²⁸ James H. Cone, *God of The Oppressed* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1975), 99.

Garvey surmised that “The doctrine of the Trinity of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost is not commonly understandable to the ordinary mind that will not think in the guiding spirit of God.” However, he concluded that for “the mind that thinks with the spirit of God it is very pleasingly understood that the Godhead is one in three parts all related and all doing good, you cannot separate them.” With this pronouncement, Garvey offered a statement on the Trinity that was orthodox enough on the surface—even hinting at the apostle Paul’s teaching in the need for spiritual discernment of divine truth. However, Garvey intended a fairly different meaning than orthodox formulations suggested. For Garvey, the incomprehensibility of the Trinity signaled a New Thought idea of the vastness of universal intelligence or “thought that created the universe” and “masters the Universe.”²⁹

At the center of Garvey’s concept for religion was the importance of intelligence. He also writes,

Where earlier conceptions of God encouraged the believer with assurances of God’s sovereign rule and just purposes, Garvey’s theology function as an inducement to intellectual growth and stewardship in the cause of racial self-help and self-development. In many ways, Garvey’s thinking foreshadowed New Age and word-of-faith influences in contemporary Christianity.³⁰

Garvey was seeking to learn more about upward movement for black americans. As he searched, he was incriminated on fraudulent charges which resulted in his deportation back to his homeland in Jamaica. But he left such a cultural mark, especially on brilliant thinkers such as Benjamin Mays and Howard Thurman. Through this influence, Benjamin Mays developed material about the Negro’s God which points to the nature of God in response to injustice. Howard Thurman produced works which also denied the idea of the trinity but yet promotes that God is the most natural thing in the world because God made everything and exists in it. He didn't necessarily believe in the triune

²⁹ Thabati M. Anyabwile, *The Decline of African American Theology From Biblical Faith to Cultural Captivity* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007), 81.

³⁰ Thabati M. Anyabwile, *The Decline of African American Theology From Biblical Faith to Cultural Captivity* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007), 81.

God but yet used and subjected himself to the Spirit. He particularly enjoyed pantheism as he understood and wanted others to understand God's immanence versus His transcendence. Thurman writes about his childhood saying,

As a child I was accustomed to spend many hours alone in my rowboat, fishing along the river, when there was no sound save the lapping of the waves against the boat. There were times when it seemed as if the earth and the river and the sky and I were one beat of the same pulse. It was a time of watching and waiting for what I did not know—yet I always knew. There would come a moment when beyond the single pulse beat there was a sense of Presence which seemed always to speak to me. My response to the sense of Presence always had the quality of personal communion. There was no voice. There was no image. There was no vision. There was God.³¹

Some would argue that Thurman's ideas have hit African American churches and pastors everywhere. He suggests people are to focus on their encounters in nature, or life in general to prove the reality of God. There were certainly differences between Thurman and Garvey but both shared similar values in the New Thought process.

Through such influences others have spoken up for the need to experience a God that primarily cares about black people because they deal with such oppression in America. This ideology predates Garvey and Thurman. In the late 1800s Bishop Henry McNeal Turner, first southern bishop in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, brought a strong declaration which sparked this notion that God is black and black people need a black God. Turner responded to an assertion that the white press mocked him because of his ideal. Turner writes,

We have as much right biblically and otherwise to believe that God is a Negro, as you buckra, or white, people have to believe that God is a fine looking, symmetrical and ornamented white man. For the bulk of you, and all the fool

³¹ Howard Thurman, *Disciplines of the Spirit* (Richmond, VA: Friends United Press, 1963), 87.

Negroes of the country, believe that God is white-skinned, blue-eyed, straight-haired, projecting-nosed, compressed-lipped and finely-robed white gentleman, sitting upon a throne somewhere in the heavens. Every race of people since time began who have attempted to describe their God by words, or by paintings, or by cravings, or by any other form or figure, have conveyed the idea that the God who made them or shaped their destinies was symbolized in themselves, and why should no the Negro believe that he resembles God as much so as other people? We do not believe that there is any hope for a race of people who do not believe that they look like God.

Demented though we be, whenever we reach the conclusion that God or even that Jesus Christ, while in the flesh, was a white man, we shall hang our gospel trumpet upon the willow and cease to preach.³²

According to this theology there is a cultural god who only caters to the needs of blacks.

This theology aided in the development of James Cone's philosophy especially during the 1960's as there was a heavy involvement within Civil Rights amongst black people. In fact, this is the perfect fit to keep the people motivated to fight for equal rights. This helped Cone's argument as he wanted the people to know that God was on their side rather than on the side of white America. He wanted blacks to know that the Bible was in line with the struggle. Anyabwile writes, "James Cone's radical Black Theology project approached this redefinition of God on two fronts: first by reorienting traditional attributes ascribed to God toward the liberation struggles of oppressed blacks in America, and second by breaking from the solution to the theodicy puzzle fashioned in the 1700s and 1800s by declaring God firmly on the side of the oppressed."³³ From this idea it is evident that black theology or liberation theology dealt with black liberation. He also adds,

³² Thabati M. Anyabwile, *The Decline of African American Theology From Biblical Faith to Cultural Captivity* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007), 89.

³³ Thabati M. Anyabwile, *The Decline of African American Theology From Biblical Faith to Cultural Captivity* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007), 89.

Black Theology dressed all attributes of God in the cloak of black liberation. The black theologian presupposed the existence of God and focused on discerning the meaning of that existence as revealed both in biblical literature and the historical condition of black people. The traditional attributes of God developed in orthodox theological circles became in Black Theology handmaidens for understanding the disposition of God toward the plight of African Americans.³⁴

Cone had a tremendous voice who is widely recognized because he was writing during the time when blacks were benchmarking freedom as they had a wide array of spokespeople such as the late great Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. So the church became the major meeting place for the civil rights meetings, it gave James Cone the platform to discuss ideas which were bottled inside of black people who would take the incarnational Jesus and create a pro-black savior. One of James Cone's influences were Paul Tillich who wrote a series of systematic theological work, but they both agreed on one concept which was "God's transcendence referred to the human purpose, dignity and value revealed in the liberation struggle of black people."³⁵ Cone argues that liberation is most typical example of God. Cone addresses this in his book when he writes,

This does not mean lending a helping hand to the poor and unfortunate blacks of society. It does not mean joining the war on poverty! Such acts are sin offerings that represent a white way of assuring themselves that they are basically "good" persons. Knowing God means being on the side of the oppressed, becoming one with them, and participating in the goal of liberation. We must become black with God!³⁶

³⁴ Thabati M. Anyabwile, *The Decline of African American Theology From Biblical Faith to Cultural Captivity* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007), 89.

³⁵ Thabati M. Anyabwile, *The Decline of African American Theology From Biblical Faith to Cultural Captivity* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007), 91.

³⁶ James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation - Fortieth Anniversary Edition* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010), 63-65, Kindle.

As we look further Cone is suggesting that Jesus is ultimately not the Lord if He is not a liberator for the people oppressed because it would suggest that God is a racist.

Anyabwile writes,

Cone argued that God is black and that any conception of God that hinders the self-determination efforts of blacks must be rejected. The “blackness” of God entailed the idea that God makes the condition of the oppressed his own condition, and that God’s essential nature is found in the concept of liberation. The “heart of the Black Theology doctrine of God” was this conception of the blackness of God, which insisted that either God identified with the struggles of black people “to the point that their experience becomes God’s experience or God is God of racism.”³⁷

Cone shows us that God is not conceivable because He is not God of the Bible. Through this theology nothing is gained and everything is lost as a result of this narrow perspective of a black god. Anyabwile writes,

Lost in Black Theology was the ability to think and write of God’s person apart from the narrow confines of blackness as struggle and suffering. While Cone extended to black people a God of liberation with one hand, he ironically enslaved God to the mono-vocal local narrative of black life with the other hand. Because Cone so firmly entrenched God in the struggle of black people, his theology ultimately featured a small, provincial deity incapable of the kind of complex and universal rule of creation understood by African Americans through Reconstruction. The diminution of God muted the significant advance of Black Theology, which was to raise the concern of black suffering and oppression for Christian doctrines of God.³⁸

This idea has crept onward to today as Anyabwile even notes that pastors such as Bishop T.D. Jakes, Creflo Dollar and many others who only look from the spectrum of suffering within their church bodies and then use the idea of Oneness theology. This theology is a

³⁷ Thabati M. Anyabwile, *The Decline of African American Theology From Biblical Faith to Cultural Captivity* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007), 94.

³⁸ Thabati M. Anyabwile, *The Decline of African American Theology From Biblical Faith to Cultural Captivity* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007), 94.

narrow window theology which focuses on one cause. Within Bishop Jakes' philosophy Anyabwile argues for the oneness of God which denies the trinitarian concept of God. He equates Jakes to other liberation theologians as they ascribed to a unrealistic political or radical theology which emphasizes the culture more than the Gospel.

But dealing within this oneness theology especially in urban churches in the black community, there can be more of a recognition of the needs of race more so than the gospel which causes the past such as Cone to be resurfaced in the 21st century. If identifying with Cone's structure Anyabwile breaks down the idea of anthropologies. He writes,

Cone defiantly proclaimed that truth could only be ascertained from within a particular community:

Cone writes,

We can say that the definition of truth for the black thinker arises from a passionate encounter with black reality. Though that truth may be described religiously as God, it is not the God of white religion but the God of black existence. There is no way to speak of this objectively; truth is not objective. It is subjective, a personal experience of the ultimate in the midst of degradation...³⁹

Within Cone's racial oppression was the central focus on this idea of black theology expressing that blacks and whites are different in light of the cross. Anyabwile writes,

But the concept of sin in Cone's contraction of Black Theology also included a racial dimension. Spurred on by the cultural relativism that lay at heart of his view of theology, Cone believed blacks and whites defined and experienced sin differently, relative to their position in the struggle for liberation. For instance, Cone held that blacks were the only people who could talk about sin because their condition of oppression located them where God and sin were revealed. Apart

³⁹ Thabati M. Anyabwile, *The Decline of African American Theology From Biblical Faith to Cultural Captivity* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007), 125-126.

from failing to resist white oppression, there seemed to be little concern for any sin on the part of African Americans. Lost in his analysis of blacks' sin was the historical Christian concern for moral corruption and need for reconciliation with God. Cone easily envisaged such corruption in whites, as their sin pervaded their entire being, blinding them to the concrete struggle for liberation and coaxing them to "simplistic" ideas about "broken relation to God." But for blacks, such pervasive corrosion of mind and soul occurred if they "sold out" to white ideals, solutions and culture. What needed redeeming, then, was not the soul but the self-conception of black people scarred and warped by injustice and violence.⁴⁰

Through this, it is seen that blacks had more of a right to be chosen as God's people and can readily relate to oppression such as it is written about in the Bible because they were oppressed by whites in America.

In the reverse, we see another race (white) who couldn't see this depth of sin as they were never oppressed but yet given the position as the oppressor. Symbolically Cone made whites to be demonized in society through their level of whiteness. He writes,

Whites, on the other hand, were incapable of perceiving the extent and depth of sin because they were white. Because whites generally did not enter into the liberation of the oppressed, they were outside the revelation event that made sin concrete and knowable and human response possible. "In a word, sin is whiteness," concluded Cone, "the desire of whites to play God in the realm of human affairs." At least symbolically, Cone came close to repudiating white humanity as he equated whiteness with sin and decried the "filthy manifestations of whiteness" in society. At this point, his anthropology was more reminiscent of the mythology of the Nation of Islam with its Yakub myth than historical Christian doctrines of man.⁴¹

These works were a reminder of many radicalized religious groups such as the nation of Islam. The nation was noted for their categorizing of whites as the devil or the

⁴⁰ Thabati M. Anyabwile, *The Decline of African American Theology From Biblical Faith to Cultural Captivity* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007), 129.

⁴¹ Thabati M. Anyabwile, *The Decline of African American Theology From Biblical Faith to Cultural Captivity* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007), 130.

demonized group in America. The nation of Islam has a Yakub myth which serves as a creation story.

The only way to flee this demonized whiteness was to rid a white person of their culture and ethnic history. If they did not rid themselves, no matter what they believed they were categorized as group of bigots. But there was also an understanding that mattered, which was the acceptance of blacks and if they did not have such approval then they could never escape the reality of being white in America. Cone writes in his book, *Black Theology and Black Power*,

For white people, God's reconciliation in Jesus Christ means that God has made black people a beautiful people; and if they are going to be in relationship with God, they must enter by means of their black brothers, who are a manifestation of God's presence on earth. The assumption that one can know God without knowing blackness is the basic heresy of the white churches. They want God without blackness, Christ without obedience, love without death. What they fail to realize is that in America, God's revelation on earth has always been black, red, or some other shocking shade, but never white. Whiteness, as revealed in the history of America, is the expression of what is wrong with man. It is a symbol of man's depravity. God cannot be white, even though white churches have portrayed him as white. When we look at what whiteness has done to the mind of men in this country, we can see clearly what the New Testament meant when it spoke of principalities and powers. To speak of Satan and his powers becomes not just a way of speaking but a fact of reality. When we can see a people who are being controlled by an ideology of whiteness, then we know what reconciliation must mean. The coming of Christ means a denial of what we thought we were. It means destroying the white devil in us. Reconciliation to God means that white people are prepared to deny themselves (whiteness), take up the cross (blackness) and follow Christ (black ghetto).⁴²

⁴² Thabati M. Anyabwile, *The Decline of African American Theology From Biblical Faith to Cultural Captivity* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007), 130.

It is clear that Cone lacked a level of respect for the white race. He went so far as to suggest that God sent His son to die for the liberation and redemption of the black race and not for all of humanity. Anyabwile writes,

In one sense Cone displayed a high regard for black identity, since God was said to be “black” through his identification with black people in their suffering. He even claimed that God was the source and ground for blackness. But Cone’s anthropology led to other problems. First, his doctrine of man produced insurmountable contradictions with the biblical record, where God “made all men of one blood” and “in his own image.” If blackness and God were so reflective of one another, where, then, was the theological room for creation “in the image of God” of not only whites, but also Asians, Native Americans, Latinos and Middle Eastern peoples? Second, his view of black humanity ultimately did more to lower the image of God than to raise the stature of African Americans. In order to closely associate God with the condition of downtrodden peoples, Cone needed to eschew “universal” conceptions of God and to choose instead a “local” deity for blacks. Third, Black Theology’s anthropology risked being both singular and superficial in its depiction of African Americans. Suffering and oppression were the only expressions of black existence.⁴³

The doctrine of election was at play, the elected and pre selected were blacks because God was black. Anyabwile writes,

Cone could not conceive of a black station in life that was not characterized by such extremities. This assumption curtailed the application of his theology. And his anthropology risked being superficial with its emphasis on contemporary fads as cultural being. Being black embodied “natural hair cuts, wearing African dashikis, and dancing to the sound of Johnny Lee Hooker or B.B. King, knowing that no matter how hard whitey tries there can be no real duplication of black soul.” A group of 250 black Methodists in “The Black Paper” (1968) exhibited similar shallowness, confessing their “failure to be reconciled with themselves as black men” by denying their blackness, parenthetically defined as “hair texture, color and other God-given physical characteristics.” The prevailing cultural ethos of the 1960s certainly emphasized such stylistic identifications with Africa, and a good case can be made that these displays were necessary corrections for years of black self-hatred and white ridicule. And, though it is unthinkable that James Cone believed blackness only or merely entailed transient cultural fads, his

⁴³ Thabati M. Anyabwile, *The Decline of African American Theology From Biblical Faith to Cultural Captivity* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007), 131.

anthropology nonetheless set the bar of blackness well below the ideals of true manhood, brotherhood and spiritual equality promulgated by earlier black folks, intellectuals, preachers and theologians.⁴⁴

Cone's understanding of the gospel was skewed because it became more peripheral than central. Today this effects, the state of churches and those planted by blacks as they focused on ideas which replaced Jesus as the priority because He is not the main theme of the church instead just a topic. These ideas are passed on as they are in lack of a new identity when it deals with blacks, therefore because of the history of oppression they draw themselves up as slaves because Jesus is not at the center.

Churches are only seeking the systems that identify with their ethnic identities instead of seeking to build a church for many cultures and ethnicities. Obviously, if you are a leader of an ethnic minority you may draw a congregation that reflects your personal identity but that doesn't mean you are limited to that demographic. Church plants are extremely significant because their is opportunity to start a fresh and build upon existing successes. Through this anthropological study, we notice that the spiritual need is diminished when there is a cultivating of personal agendas through whatever we see as the collective conscience of society. Anyabwile writes,

The consequences of this overly optimistic anthropology were many. First, it lowered in African Americans' collective conscience the importance of man's spiritual needs. Where there was no urgency prompted by a concern for sin, there was no urgency for preaching the gospel and spiritual reconciliation with God. Today, clear gospel appeals elicit obdurate responses from many people in churches because they believe sin and guilt to be psychological maladjustments

⁴⁴ Thabati M. Anyabwile, *The Decline of African American Theology From Biblical Faith to Cultural Captivity* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007), 131-132.

left over from a superstitious bygone era. In such cases, the gospel of Jesus Christ is relegated to secondary status.⁴⁵

Again the gospel is viewed with low regard. He also writes,

Second, the emergence of high estimations of man's moral ability leads many to overemphasize political and social freedom. If man no longer needs reusing from the effects of sin and the wrath of God to come, and if he is capable of ushering in a temporal utopia of sorts, then the logical focus of his energies becomes societal inequities and social structures. Salvation becomes a matter of reconstructing an inefficient but salvageable society. Great hope is placed in the great society. Churches move more aggressively toward becoming the "one stop centers" for all the physical and social needs of their communities—launching housing, credit union, education and social service endeavors. Many seem to forget to overlook the Lord's incisive question, "What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Gaining the world world seems more and more like the sole quest of man once anthropological amnesia obscures the church's memory of depravity.⁴⁶

Those who have already established churches must break free of the liberation theological framework and build from a foundation where Jesus is the center and race and culture are in the peripheral. Church plants and any church must establish Jesus at the center in order to be successful, if not it will result in failure and they will be held responsible eternally. It's all because leaders are more concerned about how to contribute to a consumeristic culture rather than recognizing the spiritual need for an eternal reward. Culture has taken more emphasis than the gospel. Churches have strayed away from the gospel being the gospel as they would like to find other methods than the purpose of redemption through Jesus Christ. There are many works that deem Liberation Theology important from the standpoint that it helps people identify who they serve. But the day is

⁴⁵ Thabati M. Anyabwile, *The Decline of African American Theology From Biblical Faith to Cultural Captivity* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007), 134.

⁴⁶ Thabati M. Anyabwile, *The Decline of African American Theology From Biblical Faith to Cultural Captivity* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007), 134-135.

awaited, where identification doesn't rely on ethnic culture but on a spiritual culture that reflects Jesus changing the world through His sacrifice, not on Jesus being a black man. The moment Jesus is emphasized as Savior and King which He was predestined to be, then we understand that it is about His sacrifice. And souls can be won from the purest place. Thus, discipleship as well can come from a pure perspective where true transformation takes place. But has this been a problem as to why black churches aren't being planted. In the chapter 4, data will be viewed from pastors who will be and are key to churches being planted. It will look at many variables including black liberation theology and the ways it has impacted the black church.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE DATA ANALYSIS

During this study, 60 pastors were asked to participate in an interview about their churches but only 10 were able to fit it in their schedules. These questions were structured to learn more about their organizations, leadership and their opinions on planting churches. It was also designed to learn if the effects of liberation theology are still in existence. Some of the pastors included in this study have asked to have their names excluded to protect their privacy.

These 10 pastors have congregation sizes that vary from 10-10,000 people. Each one of these interviews were conducted either in their church locations or over the phone. The age range for these pastors is 29 to 68 years of age. Their experiences range from 1.5-43 years in the role of Senior Pastor at their respective ministries. Within their respective age and experience there is a wealth of knowledge. Not only does the age and experience differ, they are also reflective of the many popular black denominations which include Assemblies of God, Pentecostal, Independent Baptist, Southern Baptist Convention, National Baptist Convention, USA, Full Gospel Baptist Fellowship, Non-Denominational and Christian Methodist Episcopal.

The 10 pastors interviewed took great pride in the work they participate in their respective communities. When learning about each church, interestingly enough they share a common schedule as it pertains to the actual worship service schedule. They all have 1-2 worship services and one night dedicated specifically for bible study. In the explanation of one pastor, "Sunday worship is geared toward both unbelievers and

believers, whereas bible study is geared specifically toward believers." Across the board, Sundays are designed to encourage the believer and win souls and bible studies are done for discipleship as well as Christian Education which is affectionally referred to as Sunday School. This model is followed by most black churches all around the country. This traditional model has been around since the inception of the black church.

Over the course of an interview when asked about this subject matter. It was stated, "that this helps to cultivate leadership and to develop the church through evangelism." This brings meaning to the body of Christ as they want to further educate the body (laity). This encourages biblical literacy which is essential to building solid disciples. Again, Christian Education through Sunday School carries great significance because it helps instruct and encourage the believer to get involved and to constantly practice their faith. It brings great distinction when it comes to bible study. Bible Study generally is a corporate mid week worship service with the purposes of digging deeper into the Word of God. Sunday School is more of an intimate classroom setting that is designed for the furthering of the study of the Word of God.

Also through these interviews, a couple of Pastors agreed to share a more in depth personal testimony to becoming a Senior Pastor. Rev. William Eric Shelton, Senior Pastor of Living Elevated Church, Brockton, Massachusetts shares his testimony about how he was called into the ministry and how everything fell in line as it pertains to him becoming a Senior Pastor of a church. He shares in detail his journey. He was born in Memphis, Tennessee where there was a strong acceptance for young men to begin ministry at very young ages. He attended a well known church, Boston Baptist Church, in

Memphis. The pastor of that church was a gospel music legend, Rev. Dr. Oris Mays. He recalls the great relationship, he had with him. Shelton recalled being called to the ministry at the tender age of 8 years old. He instinctively knew that God was calling him to the pastoral ministry in the future. He knew through the voice of the Lord “that he was called into the ministry and I immediately knew that one day I will pastor my very own church.” He gained tremendous support during the time that he lived in Memphis, Tennessee. He also credits the region because being a young person in ministry is not a new phenomenon in the South. Many young people were professing to be called into the ministry whether they heard from God or not. Because of the region (South) being considered the Bible belt where Christianity is widely accepted, as a result he gained tremendous support. He continues his story when his mom packed him up and moved them to Lynn, Massachusetts for greater job opportunities. He shares, “my mom moved us here for job reasons when I was eleven years old. And we joined a well known church in the area where it was recommended to us by others. As I arrived, I acknowledged my call but the church didn’t want to acknowledge it because they figured I was too young. Therefore, I lost my support and didn’t continue my pursuit of what God called me to do.” Therefore, he stopped preaching and even stopped considering the ministry. He assumed it was foreign for one to come to New England at a very young age and be able to preach. He thought what God had told him was false because he figured he would never leave that particular region of the country if it was God’s will for him to pursue ministry. Shelton had a keen interest in learning to play the piano and learned masterfully

how to play. He began to play piano at the church because being a young gifted musician was a more acceptable role in the church in Lynn, Massachusetts.

However, this role as a musician was still was not recognizing the call God had place on his life. As he got older, he kept feeling that urge from God to do what was instructed to do at a very young age. This burden would be with him until the age of 28, where he finally answered the call of God on his life. At this age, he felt he would be socially accepted amongst other ministers as he was deemed old enough for his calling to be accepted. God was instructing Eric Shelton “to be obedient” and He would guide him. The church also viewed the age of 28 as an age of accountability. However, being previously wounded, he did not feel strong enough to mention anything about his future in the role of Senior Pastor. Through reluctance, he felt is safer to participate in the youth ministry as he was closer in age to young people. It all began with the youth ministry when was the Youth President. As he was involved heavily in the youth ministry, he felt a strong call to young people and he was getting a heavy response. As he worked in this ministry, it was helpful to him because it forced him to think outside of the box and find ways that are unique to empower a younger generation to seek after God through His Word. Within a year, opportunities began to pour into his lap which further confirmed his call to the ministry and potentially being a Senior Pastor. Shelton stated, “I felt confirmation of that call, especially when I was being sought out for positions at many churches. Soon, I was called to a church to become the Youth Pastor because of my various skills. The ability from God to think outside the box is what helped me.”¹

¹ Eric Shelton, interview by Michael D. Bailey, Boston, November 3, 2012.

During the course of gathering this data, I had the opportunity of going to his installation service as the Senior Pastor of the church he currently serves. One Pastor shared his reflection with me as he felt proud about Shelton's accomplishments. During the time of Eric becoming a Youth Pastor, he switched denominations which had a profound impact on his ministry because it was a brand new start. He became a member of the Church of God in Christ. One pastor noted, "I stalked Eric, wherever he was speaking or at an event. I made sure I was there so that he would know that we support his ministry and call. I also wanted him to work with our young people at the church. I recognized the call that is on his life but if I could have him before he pursues that, I would be the happiest Pastor in the whole wide world."² This Pastor finally had Eric under his leadership for approximately 5 years and they noticed that the youth program went from 50 kids, primarily teens to about 300 teens his first year. All of sudden, there was a shift in the age of the ministry as the church began seeing more involvement from young people. Imagine a crowd of 500 members and suddenly Sunday Morning worship experiences were filled with 1200 people and 700 of which were teenagers. It even forced the Senior Pastor to change the ways that he was doing things because now he had the job of not only appealing to the main congregation, but it was also his job to appeal to these young people because they are the next generation of the church. Shelton felt that his goal in life was to just simply deal with a young people as the numbers were rapidly increasing at this church. However, while at this place, he carried a burden to become a church planter.

² Alfred Hurt, interview by Michael D. Bailey, Boston, November 3, 2012.

When he felt the call, he began to brainstorm and pray about the church God was calling him to lead. He had training with young people but he knew because of his background in the Church of God in Christ, that to submit an application for a vacant pulpit would not be his best option because he had a vision for a church that didn't align with the traditional model. So he was sure that he was called to plant a church. Shelton says, "If I were to take over a place, it would be pandemonium because people take time to adjust to change and I know where God has called me. In order for me to do what I am destined to do I have to start fresh."³ In this church plant, Eric knew that there were a lot of sacrifices that he must make including that he must tender his resignation from ministry at his current church to pursue what God was calling him to do. He also knew that he would have to bathe his life with prayer, scripture and fasting in order to discipline himself for the work God was calling him for. He shares that one of the passages near and dear to him is David speaking in the 119th Psalm. He highlights this passage as he desires that relationship with God that David demonstrates, especially when it comes to what God has called him to do. He focuses on the 133rd verses as it says: Keep steady my steps according to your promise, and let no iniquity get dominion over me.

Therefore, as he prayerfully made this decision, he stepped down at his current church and at the time and began his church plant journey. As he begins this journey, he shares with me, "I absolutely need to find a way to stay focused and start off where I can be smart about the moves I am getting ready to make to even begin building a

³ Eric Shelton, interview by Michael D. Bailey, Boston, November 3, 2012.

congregation and fundraising for the ministry.”⁴ Again he tells me he went to prayer because he needed an answer as to if God had truly given this vision.

Finally, he gets an answer after a couple of months. He begins a bible study independent of the church that he feels will empower people but also help set up the dynamic and demographic for the church plant. He calls it Breaking Bread Bible study which he conducted for 11 months. During this time, he was starting a small street evangelism team to invite people to the Bible Study. He first began with 20 people and before it was over, he had over 50 people. He was clear that this Bible Study had to be done differently in light of what other studies were happening where people would study the Word of God which was usually instructed by the Pastor and when it was done they would go home. Instead Shelton wanted it to be designed as the apostles in Acts 2:42. It states, “And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.”

The Bible Study consisted of a teaching, prayer and fellowship that included having a meal when it was done. This was highly successful because, not only did the people receive a very practical and relevant teaching, but they also had an opportunity to engage in relationships that caused a merger. This merger was to aid in knowing that as God’s people, it is necessary for people to spend time together and fellowship. He did not want it to be a traditional Bible study where you come in and leave out the same way and do not get an intentional opportunity to meet formally. While in its beginning stages, he had an additional 20 followers through a live web stream. All together, he was averaging

⁴ Eric Shelton, interview by Michael D. Bailey, Boston, November 3, 2012.

almost 75 people. As this study was being conducted new converts were joining the Bible Studies. They also were participating in a local church and the group was feeling empowered to make a difference through in depth study of God's Word and how it relates to them. This made the difference as they had a place of study and a place of fellowship. This is a result to remind people how beneficial it is to study God's Word but you also need a covering, leader and Pastor. During this portion, he shares that this was one of the highlights of his work week because it was time where he could spend with people and begin planting seeds for the church plant that was soon to arrive.

During the period of the Bible Study, through much prayer Shelton receives a revelation of what to name the church God is entrusting him with. He remembers receiving the name "Living Elevated Church." He was so excited that a name for the church finally came. As soon as he received the name the he received the vision, goal and focus of the ministry.

The focus is as follows:

"To win souls, to usher people and educate people about the Word of God."

The vision is as follows:

"Lead people with worship and equip them with the Word of God so that they may be empowered to live elevated lives."

The goal of this ministry is as follows:

"To win as many souls as we can through the Gospel of Jesus Christ, so that people will be living elevated lives." ⁵

⁵ Eric Shelton, interview by Michael D. Bailey, Boston, November 3, 2012.

From his experiences in the youth ministry at his former church, he realized the style of ministry he wanted to have. He wanted the first priority to be a 'church outside of the box.' As the church style would be outside of the box, then that would mean the church would be different and not as traditional as they would like the Holy Spirit to run the service. There is a set program but they don't want to be so restricted by the program, that service loses its meaning and focus. Shelton emphasizes that this even goes to his prepared sermons, he does not want to be so restricted that if there was a shift in the atmosphere that he would miss out on discerning what the Spirit is saying to the people of God. Knowingly, he comes from a more charismatic tradition, but he wants to make sure that people feel welcome and able to worship the Lord whatever way is comfortable to them. He recognizes that everyone is not charismatic but he wants to foster a strong worship environment.

Through hearing and receiving confirmation from the Lord about the church plant, he tells me has more energy than he's ever had in his life as he is determined to work to get this task completed. He vowed to work to get this church planted even if he was alone. It's a reminder to me that we cannot give up on the work that God has assigned for us.

Also during the period of the 11 months, Pastor Shelton made a conscious decision to set out a plan as to how the ministry was going to be financed over this period of time. He had to look thoroughly at the budget because one thing was certain that he did not want the ministry to fall into debt. He acknowledged the personal debt he had dealt with and did not want the church to suffer the same consequences. He figured that if the

church suffered, he would suffer emotionally and have guilt placed on his shoulders as a leader trying to start off the church with pride rather than realistically considering the options. He told me, “its easy to start a church with debt as you begin to buy things and take any building, without counting the losses. The biggest loss could be dealing with the consequences of not being a good steward but instead trying to prove to certain individuals that your church has the best things however it lacks the Spirit.”⁶ This was a heavy reminder that if the Spirit is not right, then the church won’t work. There are so many times, monies can be spent in places that are unnecessary and cause problems that can wound the church forever. One of Shelton’s main motivations is that “800 churches are planted every year and 400 churches die every year.” The question that runs through the mind of this leader is does he want the church to be a part of the dying church list. He states that he has made a committed decision that he does not want to be in the death trap for churches.

As Rev. Shelton is looking critically at his situation, he realizes the heavy responsibility and says “I have to make this possible through fundraising and my own personal finances.”⁷ His personal finances include preaching and speaking engagements where he receives an honorarium. To this effort of finding the church one thing that is highly recommended if accessible is a financial planner who would be connected to the purpose of having this vision from God come into reality. To his amazement, doors kept opening for him including jobs, preaching and speaking engagements. He was also

⁶ Eric Shelton, interview by Michael D. Bailey, Boston, November 3, 2012.

⁷ Eric Shelton, interview by Michael D. Bailey, Boston, November 3, 2012.

receiving donations from anonymous donors which made it possible for his dream to come to fruition. I must admit that I was personally encouraged by the mere fact, if God has given you a plan, He will provide the necessary resources.

During this time as the funds began to become available, the next phase of the church plant for him was to find the right building. This was a critical part as it is necessary for the plant to be in the right location. Many times, churches die because they are planted in the wrong area. Through much prayer, the requirements for this church plant is to be on a main road with a lot of traffic, must be in a noticeable spot in the central, must have a marquee sign stand so that people can see, and finally must be at a place where there is a lot of parking. Now he admits at first as he dealt with several realtors, it began to become a discouraging journey as the properties were ridiculously priced and weren't in the right area. Or it was the worst realtor, whose main goal to make a commission.

During the transitional eleventh month journey, in the tenth month they found the right realtor and the right property with manageable space and amenities where they can have more than enough space to accomplish their initial goals and fulfill all the necessary requirements for the church plant. It was exciting for him as more and more the dream was coming into reality. All of sudden with the church came a donation of pews from a local church. They also gave instruments for worship music alongside an old sound system including cordless microphones that were very usable and kept in perfect condition. It was very interesting, that all Rev. Shelton had to do was be obedient and follow Christ and everything will fall into place. Shelton told me, "I really couldn't

believe what took place and the provisions made, but I do believe that once the Lord allows a burden to be placed inside of you then it will come into existence physically.”⁸

He is clear what type of leader he has to be in the initial process of the church plant. He has to be a leader that handles the small things right away so that he is able to ensure the people to see him focus on what needs to be focused on first. This way the small problems won't run interference on the major problems that may be faced. These problem are from maintenance to interpersonal problems.

Shelton also realizes that he has to be a leader that is seen and his presence felt positively. He has to be concerned about all walks of life. He needs to be active in the educational system, sports, politics and business. He must let God's Word guide him in all of these areas. If he can't be representative then he needs to find connections or other figures that could represent him and be extension of the church, so that he may have access to the city at large. He tells me, “a leader must position themselves in proper places so that can be seen and be active. And if you cannot be there ask yourself, who do you have around me who can represent the key factors in the city?”⁹

From this aspect he knows that he has to have connections in order to make an impact in the community that he is serving. He doesn't want anyone to be left out as there are so many people who are either locked out or secluded from the community. Churches are meant to grow and change lives but we must be active and seen by people. Shelton was sharing with me about persistence, that we must work hard in order that the

⁸ Eric Shelton, interview by Michael D. Bailey, Boston, November 3, 2012.

⁹ Eric Shelton, interview by Michael D. Bailey, Boston, November 3, 2012.

question will never be asked, “Where is the church and its influences?” There are problems that Christ is the only saving power. As a result of him receiving clarity, he wants to make it his business that everyone begins to understand the reasons we take the ordinances such as Communion, Baptism and even Tithing.

For those who want to serve under his leadership in a specific office, they must be clear and examined as far as why do they believe and what they believe. Saying it in a way that can be easily interpreted and will empower others to get involved. One key to a successful ministry is the involvement of your congregation, so that it will feel like they’re a part of the ownership of the church plant. Growth is also necessary for the function of the church. In addition, to the function, it also involves influence in the community as if you have different types of people, you can reach more people of different cultures and nationalities. Therefore, since Pastor Shelton is an African American, it would push the church way beyond being another Black church, but a church of different nationalities and cultures. He shared his sentiments from the Apostle Paul in Romans 1:13-18,

I do not want you to be unaware, brothers,* that I have often intended to come to you (but thus far have been prevented), in order that I may reap some harvest among you as well as among the rest of the Gentiles. I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians,* both to the wise and to the foolish. So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith,* as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”* For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. -Romans 1:13-18

He is also interested in impacting a generation that will boldly proclaim the Gospel that is shared and supposed to be preached. So many times, it goes unnoticed especially close to him those respective churches who will teach and preach the Gospel and not live it out.

Another noticeable characteristic of Pastor Shelton is that he desires a multi-age group. He realizes that adults are going to be key contributors, but he desires youth and a strong youth ministry as this is the background that helped form him in ministry. He notices that if young people are involved and take ownership in the church, they are able and capable of keeping the legacy alive. With building upon this legacy, our youth can be taught habits to sustain the church. This can create a familial habit to make sure that future generations see the need to be obedient to God's Word. Again, these habits and behaviors would be evident in everything. It also sets a precedence when it comes to other churches as some people may not reside in their neck of the woods forever. This would foster a behavior to critically think about other places that follow God's Word or diverge from it.

Before, they do anything else they notice that they need to see the Bishop of their jurisdiction in order to have support for the plant. To his surprise, this was the easiest portion and received support as soon as he walked through the door. As he opened his mouth to tell the Bishop he wanted to plant the church, the Bishop was excited and told him that he has the full support of him and the denomination.

Now they are ready to go into the vacant space. Pastor Shelton gives me a personal tour of the building and it was exciting. Although the place was a bit shattered from the former owners, another provision was made through his family. His in-laws and

intermediate family lived in the area and they made contributions to the building including carpentry, painting, carrying and lifting the materials that needed be in this church plant. To his surprise, the family had made a decision to leave their respective churches and be the chief officers of the building so that the church could function properly.

Knowingly that this could create problems because he feared some could be seeking high positions and be irresponsible. This can happen because they view the 'Pastor' as family rather than the Pastor of the church. However, God worked it out for him so that the family comes from the understanding that Pastor Shelton is the 'Pastor' and they must respect the position and mantle placed on his life. It was and still is a great success in the ministry as they even refer to him not as son, daughter, brother, cousin but as 'Pastor' as they believe there is a time and place for everything.

As Pastor Shelton has begun his journey in the church plant, it is noticeable that he keeps the same work ethic. I followed up with him and he is really excited as people are making a commitment to Living Elevated. They are working very hard and inviting others to church. Over a span of 4 months, they have about 100 members who are really spending their energy in the church plant. The church plant is in its initial phase but I know that this church is going to be a great church. Currently, Pastor Shelton is bi-vocational until the church can carry his salary. However, his job as the Dean of Discipline at a local Boston school helps him meet new people and find hope in individuals who are troubled. This even helps with his ministry as he builds a

relationship and soon can share the Gospel of Christ with those children. Shelton is a person I know that God is really going to do great things with.

Another Pastor that I had the opportunity of hearing his life story is Archbishop LeRoy Bailey, Jr. who is the Senior Pastor of The First Cathedral (First Baptist Church of Hartford). His roots also extend back to Memphis, Tennessee. LeRoy Bailey Jr. roots extend back as he felt his call at the age of 10 years old. His mother was a well known organist at the church he attended named Gold Leaf Missionary Baptist Church. He came from a broken home through divorce. His father began to become very distant. He recognized his call through the voice of the Lord as well as other pastors but his life was tremendously different. He credits The Senior Pastor of Golden Leaf Missionary Baptist Church, Memphis, Tennessee who helped developed him to hear and answer the call from God. He stated, “During the familial crisis, one Sunday afternoon when he was about 8 years of age, Rev. LA Hamblin stopped me as I was with my mother and asked me did I want to live with him. Now, you know my mother was a bit careful about this question but allowed me to take advantage of the opportunity. Rev. Hamblin didn't have any biological children but I believe the Holy Spirit spoke to him about me. This relationship groomed me for the lifework that I am involved with today.”¹⁰ He acknowledges this relationship as he affectionally referred to this man as “Daddy.” This relationship remained and he lived with them up until his young adulthood. Archbishop Bailey was mentored by Rev. Hamblin and one piece that he credits to his success was a tradition in the church which was to recite the 23rd Psalm and The Lord’s Prayer as it was apart of

¹⁰ LeRoy Bailey, Jr., interview by Michael D. Bailey, Boston, December 16, 2012.

each service. “I used to recite it and watch the church as a young people would recite it and the crowd would think it was cute, but whenever an adult recited it and led the congregation the whole audience would begin to cry as they knew that the adult really knew what it meant to their personal lives and walks.” He recalls the call to ministry as Rev. Hamblin put him up to preach on June 18, 1956 as he preached “Father forgive them for they know not what they do” from Luke 23:34 when Jesus was crucified.

However, there were some skeptics as to why Bailey was preaching. There was a service where he recalls preaching and all of a sudden he blacked out. He states, “it was like the Holy Spirit took over my lips that when I came back to myself the church was shouting. People were excited and the room was ignited. People were running around and most importantly people came to Christ.”¹¹ And when he took his seat, he was sharing that the charismatic worship still went onward. When the room began to settle, he said, “there was a man screaming, Rev. Hamblin, Rev. Hamblin, Rev. Hamblin! And my preacher father looked as he was alarmed by his screaming. And the gentleman said, I have something to say. And Rev. Hamblin allowed him to speak. All of sudden, the man said, that boy Bailey! I didn’t believe he was called to preach because of his age. But now I know he’s called. He has something to say. And the church was excited because of what he said.”¹²

As a result of this and many other sermons, Bailey’s fame grew in Memphis and especially being under the leadership of Rev. Hamblin. He traveled a lot with Rev.

¹¹ LeRoy Bailey, Jr., interview by Michael D. Bailey, Boston, December 16, 2012.

¹² LeRoy Bailey, Jr., interview by Michael D. Bailey, Boston, December 16, 2012.

Hamblin as he was a well noted preacher in the USA. He preached for famous preachers such as the late Clarence LaVaughn Franklin which was the father of the famed Rhythm and Blues Singer, Aretha Franklin. Archbishop was granted these opportunities as well. He stated, “there were times when daddy would have me preach in his place impromptu and I didn't embarrass him.” Such a great call, he was given the opportunity of becoming the Assistant Pastor of Golden Leaf Missionary Baptist Church. He also occupied the role of being the Youth Pastor.

Next, he went to American Baptist Theological College where he would travel back and forth to Memphis on weekends to support and even preach at the church. After he received his bachelors of arts, he moved to Washington, DC to attend Howard University Divinity School where he would still travel back on weekends back to Memphis for the support of the church not knowing that this would prepare him for his future role as a Senior Pastor. As he was there, he received a call from a local pastor in Holyoke, Massachusetts who knew him from Memphis for the need of a Senior Pastor for the First Baptist Church of Hartford in Hartford, Connecticut which happened to be in existence for over 2 years. He was at the age of 24 when they called him.

The local pastors were generally around the age of 30 years or older. So there was hesitation to take him seriously with certain members because of his youth. One of the original founders of The First Baptist Church of Hartford, Ida R. Coleman, recalls a story as she wanted new young leadership with a tremendous vision. She stated, “there was a story of a lady that when she opposed the idea of selecting him. That night she stirred up trouble at a meeting about calling Bailey as the new pastor. That night,

somehow out of her freezer a turkey which was placed properly not to fall, fell out her freezer and broke her foot. Her first thought she told the people was from the meeting and her behavior. She came to conclusion that happened because of it. She told us that she will never again deny this man. She was so sure that because of her attitude and reluctance to Rev. Bailey that the turkey fell and broke her foot.”¹³

So, he took it and didn't know what to expect. The culture and climate was different than the South as he was migrating to New England. New England was known to him as the “preachers graveyard.” In fact, he tells this story as he was great friends with a local pastor in Memphis as he said he wanted to quit after two years. The story consisted of “whose church is it?” The friend reminded Archbishop that its Christ Church and in order for it run smoothly it must be governed by Christ. Through this advice, the church has grown since his arrival in 1971 from 66 members to 11,000 plus on the church records.

Looking at both of these stories, it is very key to examine the pattern of the churches acceptance of them. Both men started preaching at the very young age of 10. In the South it was more tolerated but not necessarily accepted. Within the two different generations, preaching at a younger age was acceptable in the South, but was quite problematic in the North. Both had ministry foundations inn the youth ministry which helped develop the call before becoming Senior Pastors and/or Church Planter.

Within these two regions, the North and the South, there are two different perspectives. The South was more affirming of Christian beliefs whereas the North dealt

¹³ Ida R. Coleman, interview by Michael D. Bailey, Boston, December 20, 2013.

with the tension between faith and intellectualism. Within this context both men had the burden of ministry in their lives. They both had a tremendous struggle relocating to the north because age was paid attention to rather than maturity.

Both of these gentlemen operating as Senior Pastors had two different journeys as Pastor Shelton planted a church and Archbishop Bailey took the lead of a vacant church. Two different lead calls but the same mission to win souls to Christ and make disciples. Both in urban environments but one is now outside of the church. The First Baptist Church of Hartford which is known now as The First Cathedral is in a suburb of Hartford, Connecticut. Living Elevated Church is in the heart of the city of Brockton, Massachusetts. This is actually an interesting dynamic which is reflected later in the data, the move of an urban based church into suburbia.

These are a couple testimonies to how Pastors recognize the call as Pastors share similar stories of having an audible voice speak to them about the work that must be done. But there is acknowledgement that it can come through various signs. Through this study, there was an opportunity of testing the Pastors when it comes to why aren't black churches being planted? In looking at the current state of these ministries with locations, 9 out of the 10 pastors have their ministries based outside of the communities where their partitioners live. This speaks volume to the people base they are serving. As one pastor noted, "its like we've looked for upward mobility which a lot of times means moving outside of the city."

Every church examined during this study comes from urban city environments and 9 out of 10 have moved into suburban areas as they've experienced growth. Through

speaking with these pastors only 2 of these pastors regret the notion of moving out of the city. One pastor even shared, “it would've helped the church more if at least we maintained a former location just to be able to accommodate the city more.” As only one church who has stayed in the city, Eric D. Etheridge, Senior Pastor of Clifford Temple, Albany, Georgia credits the structure of the denomination as they place you and move you into whatever church they assign. He even shares about the structure about the denomination with your calling to the ministry. Etheridge stated, “In my denomination, once a person accepts their calling, we have a system designed to help decipher your calling. This is a 4 year examination period which you go through a series of classes taught by various ministers. During this time frame, I was able to understand my calling better in which God would have me serve His people better.”¹⁴

Also, the church has only about 80 members. Size is a major contributive factor to moving to the suburbs for these congregations. Its kind of a reminder of the 1970's show, "The Jeffersons" as one moves from low income urban environments to high income environments.

As size plays a significant role in the life of the church, the demographics are very similar. These churches range from 90%-100% Black American which includes blacks of Caribbean Descent from islands such as Barbados, Jamaica and more. Only a couple churches felt comfortable to discuss the median income which was \$30,000. This is a very low salary in which the majority of people live in the city. Another church noted that their membership consists of the median being \$75,000. Looking at the life of the

¹⁴ Eric D. Etheridge, interview by Michael D. Bailey, Boston, February 17, 2014.

church the median amount of youth is 10% ages 0-18, 30% Young Adult ages 18-39, 30% Adult ages 40-65 and 10% Senior Citizen ages 66 and up. These are the key players to these churches.

The next issue that was examined was are they focused on the Gospel of Christ when preaching their messages. In looking at these elements, all the pastors were asked what are the major issues with the people and are you focusing on these issues. The presented issues were: Economic Opportunities, Crime Rate, Living Resources, Outreach in the area of: Prayer, Clothing, Medical Attention, Food, Shelter, Education, Health and Wellness, Marriage, Employment, Parenting, Mentorship, Entrepreneurial Ventures, and Redevelopment. 8 of the 10 church leaders have confessed to using liberation theology or what they have identified as “Black Theology” which is more focused on a pro-black gospel so that blacks can see their physical needs being met.

As a result of these issues, each pastor confessed to focusing their messages on this area to make sure that they are able to reach the need with their congregation. Each one acclaims to have great balance when it comes to being balanced with the Word of God and issues that are reoccurring within their membership. The goal of each of these pastors is to be able to draw a connection to remind the people that Christ is there to facilitate those needs.

Amongst issues in these communities is how we view the world. Each pastor was asked do they open their pulpits for preaching by other cultures? Each one has kindly answered yes. 100% of these churches want to introduce their ministries to diversity and becoming a global ministry. There is a great appreciation for their ministry to hear new

voices with different perspectives to remind the church that there is many types of people. Interestingly enough as far as when asked about the most important facets of the church life, only 5 out of 10 promoted winning souls and making disciples. One pastor noted that the most important facet of his church was liberation from social, political and economic oppression. Such as the pastor who found liberation from social, political and economic oppression. Thoughts like this were shared with the other pastors. Everything else ranged from discovering a prayer life, discipleship, kingdom living and making Jesus the BIG deal which was placed nearly or if the least important. Very interesting statistic as far as the goal of the church. In planning for the next 5 years in leadership only 2 of the churches that have seen a mismanaged vision recognized that they must win souls and make disciples. And will begin to alter their ideals to recognize that need, whereas 2 churches plan to acquire more property to continuing their current agenda. 1 church has confessed to not having a future vision at all. And every pastor that has participated in this data has the end result through their mission and visions of the church to win souls and make disciples.

But through this study, it gets to the core matter with these results and agendas have these churches been church planting. The answer is yes for only 2 churches. These churches have made winning souls their campaign as one church planted 16 churches and the other church has planted 6 churches. Only 1 church has not made winning souls as the priority has planted 2 churches. So a total 30% of this study have ventured to plant churches. Only 1 church acknowledged that they are not called to become a church planter and it has not been a priority whereas everyone else have acknowledged that in

the next few years, they plan on planting churches. About 90% of these pastors who plan on planting churches have said that the problem has been that they lack resources to plant. Even the churches that have average congregations of 3000. Therefore, it is not the top priority but definitely recognize the needs. Other issues that have been mentioned as age. One pastor has shared that “my age plays a factor and I waited too long to plant which has impacted the resources to maintain one.”

But for those churches that are to forecasting to be planted, each one has said that their is a specific people group that they are targeting. They are strictly African Americans. Only one church added the inclusion of “because of the lack of innovative methods of producing the gospel.” So this pastor believes that he is capable enough to be creative to create a strategy that is creative enough to change the way the gospel is presented.

Throughout, this study the data reflects that these black pastors spend a majority of their time focusing on culture rather than the Gospel. 100% of the churches listed winning souls and making disciples as a goal although limited time is spent actually working toward this goal. However, only 50% of the pastors focus on winning souls and making disciples. Learning about the theology of the church with liberation “black theology”, 80% of these churches utilize this theology. Black liberation theology issues range from the economy to health wellness. This theology has caused the focus shift from the gospel and up. Most churches want to plant new churches. 70% of the churches want to plant or plant again. 30% of these churches have planted. The number one

reason for the lack of fulfilling this desire has been a lack of resources. All have concluded the number one resource is the lack of money.

In retrospect of this data, there is an emergence of churches who have been perpetually using black liberation theology which has hindered progress to cause growth especially in the area of church planting. This black theology has caused a focus on culture rather than Christ. It is really key to understand the context of the culture but the context of culture can outweigh the message of the cross.

In this particular study, we see many wanted to plant churches but need the resource of money. Because of this lack, churches aren't being planted. This need alongside of black liberation theology has crippled the black community. In the final chapter, let's examine new suggestions to help eliminate the problems as to why black churches aren't being planted.

CHAPTER FIVE: DEAR BLACK CHURCH LEADERS

The church must be gospel centered. The struggle of the black church came into existence through the ills of racism in America. Looking at the existence of the black church, it all began with the goal of black liberation that still exists today. This theology has altered the view of the church to focus on the cultural context more than the gospel of Jesus Christ. As a result it has lessened the strength that can develop when a black church is planted and thrives. Extensive studies have been done on churches which have been forced to close their doors. Which has had a significant effect on the black faith community.

In America alone, approximately 3500 — 4000 churches close their doors each year. “Churches lose an estimated 2,765,000 people each year to nominalism and secularism.”¹ So there has been a deep decline in the participation of church, especially in the black church. The gospel is key to the life of the church. Tim Keller recommends a set of standards as to the teaching and preaching of the gospel. Keller writes, “1. The gospel is good news, not good advice... 2. The gospel is good news announcing that we have been rescued or saved... 3. The gospel is news about what has been done by Jesus Christ to put right our relationship with God...”²

¹ “Twentysomethings Struggle to Find Their Place in Christian Churches.” The Barna Group Ltd., posted September 24, 2003, <https://www.barna.org/barna-update/5-barna-update/127-twentysomethings-struggle-to-find-their-place-in-christian-churches#.VBdC9y5dVic> (accessed August 1, 2012).

² Timothy Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 499-545, Kindle.

The church must be a place that is gospel centered. Whenever the gospel is not the teaching of the church, it has lost its focus. Keller writes,

Because the gospel is endlessly rich, it can handle the burden of being the one “main thing” of a church. First Peter 1:12 and its context indicate that the angels never tire of looking into and exploring the wonders of the gospel. It can be preached from innumerable stories, themes, and principles from all over the Bible. But when the preaching of the gospel is either confused with or separated from the other endeavors of the church, preaching becomes mere exhortation (to get with the church’s program or a biblical standard of ethics) or informational instruction (to inculcate the church’s values and beliefs). When the proper connection between the gospel and any aspect of ministry is severed, both are shortchanged.³

In chapter 2 of this work, author Darrin Patrick was cited as he argues that the gospel calls for a response as its good news. It’s purely a proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ. Keller writes,

The gospel is “heraldic proclamation” before it is anything else. 20 It is news that creates a life of love, but the life of love is not itself the gospel. The gospel is not everything that we believe, do, or say. The gospel must primarily be understood as good news, and the news is not as much about what we must do as about what has been done. The gospel is preeminently a report about the work of Christ on our behalf — salvation accomplished for us. That’s how it is a gospel of grace. Yet, as we will see in the next chapter, the fact that the gospel is news does not mean it is a simple message. There is no such thing as a “one size fits all” understanding of the gospel.⁴

According to the data referenced in chapter 4, it is clear that many churches lack the gospel. 100% of each church’s mission is focused on winning souls to Christ, but 50% actually follow this call as they preach to the physical needs of the community. 80%

³ Timothy Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 760-765, Kindle.

⁴ Timothy Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 765-770, Kindle.

of churches have shared they use black liberation theology preaching to meet the needs ranging from the economy to health in the community.

Becoming An Acts 2 Church

The response of the gospel is what shapes the church. In Acts 2, we see the birth of the church. After the death of Christ, He mandates that believers share the gospel to win souls to Christ and discipling them. Jesus states in Matthew 28:18-20,

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in* the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."-Matthew 28:18-20

This command is further referenced in Mark 16:15-20,

And he said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up serpents with their hands; and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover." So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by accompanying signs. - Mark 16:15-20

Jesus teaches the centrality of Christianity which is to spread the message of His redemptive power. Before Jesus ascends to heaven, He promises the gift of the Holy Spirit which would cause believers to become even more effective. Jesus told his disciples in Acts 1:4-8,

"you heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with* the Holy Spirit not many days from now." So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his

own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”-Acts 1:4-8

This voice would be the difference maker in the church as it was instrumental to the birth of the church. This voice of the Holy Spirit was in Acts 2:1-4.

When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested* on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. -Acts 2:1-4

As a result of receiving the Holy Spirit, three thousand souls were added to the church.

The gospel required a response since it was a gift from God. The voice of this same spirit must be instrumental in the church today. But its' precedence must come from the gospel. Jesus even makes this promise in John 12:32, “And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” As Jesus is lifted, the church grows spiritually and physically. This even affects the way the dominant context and culture is understood.

As Christ is sovereign, churches can be planted with the focus of winning souls to Christ and discipling them in an assembly of believers. The church becomes a place of being gospel centered and driven.

It's key to be connected with others who are influenced by the gospel centered to become an Acts 2 church. It's cited in Acts 2:42-47,

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes,

they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.-Acts 2:42-47

In Acts 2:42-47, its clear that the believers had everything in common.

Therefore churches should have a network where accountability is shared about structuring an Acts 2 church reflective in scripture. The pastors and religious leaders would encourage prayer, scripture meditation and fasting. They have the potential to meet annually or bi-annually through attending a major conference that it focuses on the spiritual disciplines. Whereby these disciplines are explained in depth.

The practice of prayer, scripture reading and meditation as well as fasting invites the Holy Spirit to take over the person and the church. These are acts of total surrendering to Christ's commands. The religious leaders of this conference would even inspire special attention to the spiritual gifts being experienced so that its an intentional move of the Holy Spirit. This conference would be focused on accomplishing the goal of asking the Lord to send the Holy Spirit and its renewal power to churches. These spiritual gifts are according to 1 Corinthians 12:4-11. Paul writes,

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills. -1 Corinthians 12:4-11

This group should be able to gauge the life of the church. It can assist in strengthening and overcoming the weaknesses of the current church to make sure that the church is solid through the gospel.

Kill The Personal Agendas & Focus On The Spiritual Disciplines

Being gospel centered helps the whole church from leadership to the laity. This causes the innate desire for the spiritual disciplines such as fasting, prayer and consulting scripture.

In chapter 2 of this research, Ed Stetzer suggests many ways you can church plant irresponsibly. Tim Keller also points out the ways one can plant or have church capriciously primarily generated by personal agendas. Looking at the data analysis, there is revelation as to the power of theological framework in the life of these churches. 80% of pastors have confessed to using black liberation theology which drives a personal agenda of promoting the culture over Christ.

The area of themes being preached about in the pulpits have been more political than Christ centered. Paul forewarned about this conceptual thought process in 2 Timothy 4:1-4 when referring to “itching ears preaching.” Paul wrote to Timothy,

I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.-1 Timothy 4:1-4

When personal agendas are eliminated, Christ generates the response. This causes one to draw nearer to Christ especially through the Holy Spirit. In the story when Jesus was at

the garden of Gethsemane praying prior to being arrested. He found His disciples sleeping instead of being watchful. Jesus states,

And they went to a place called Gethsemane. And he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled. And he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch." And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will." And he came and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."-Matthew 26:26-41

He reminds them to listen to the Holy Spirit and stay vigilant in prayer. He uses prayer as this is significant to churches everywhere. Jesus makes issue about the temple being the house of prayer in Matthew 21:13 as it brings together the unity of Christ and man through communication. Jesus also said in John 15:7, "If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you." And the writer of I John 5:13-15 states,

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life. And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him. -I John 5:13-15

One of the keys to the success of the church planter and plant is prayer.

Fasting is also a necessity. Jesus spent time fasting and in prayer according to the story of when Satan was trying to tempt Jesus as referenced in Matthew 4:1-10. Even the apostle Paul fasted during his first missionary journey in Acts 13 as it drew Him closer to the gospel of Christ. Acts 13:1-3,

Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.-Acts 13:1-3

Through prayer and fasting, one is able to absorb the Word of God better and discern the voice of God more clearly. Due to Jesus, He was more prepared with the Word of God and used it in its proper context. Paul did it as well as it carried great weight so that the faith can be activated through vulnerable times. Fasting causes divine revelation especially with reading the scriptures. As Jesus was fasting in Matthew, He was strong and prepared to defend the word of God. Matthew 4:1-10 states,

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." But he answered, "It is written, "'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, "'He will command his angels concerning you,' and "'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'" Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'" Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, "'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.'" -Matthew 4:1-10

Jesus displayed focus that the Bible must be viewed as the inspired, inerrant, and infallible word of God. Paul argued for the divine inspiration of the word of God. He wrote in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for

teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God* may be complete, equipped for every good work.

Being able to kill personal agendas and focus on disciplines is going back to being gospel-centered. So that it is understood that this word carries a great charge. 2 Timothy 4:1-2 states, "I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching."

This mandate demonstrates the importance that the Word of God is true and is the ultimate source through which others can be guided to develop relationship with Jesus Christ. Further interpreted in verses 3-4 of 2 Timothy 4, the Bible describes people who will misuse the word of God through seeking and implementing personal agendas.

Therefore for paralyzing personal agendas, accountability groups are necessary. These groups would serve to help make sure that the gospel is in the forefront. It'll evaluate the direction especially for leaders. Two to three pastors would get to know each other on a personal level even to the level of being prayer partners for one another. They would also evaluate sermons, scriptures and calendars and challenge each other. They would also help advise about time management and make sure the main agenda is about the gospel.

It would be asked to evaluate one's personal life with the inclusion of home life. So that the priorities would be in common in the order of:

1. God

2. Family
3. Ministry
4. The Other Stuff

So that the gospel will lead the life of the leader which reflects on the church.

Being A Gospel Driven Leader and Plant Churches

The church is significant. It is the body of work defined by the gospel. Churches should church plant for the sake of the gospel. This would include cultivating leadership and sending leaders out. Jesus promised to fulfill His goal. If we go back to John 12:32, there is a clear reminder for believers to lift Christ higher by proclaiming and He will do the rest of the work.

Especially church planters must be diligent in staying true to the gospel message all the way to death. It's about finishing the race within the framework of the gospel and not focusing on cultural impulses that can lead one astray. It takes faith in Christ that as you spread His Word, He'll provide the resources for the work to come into fruition. One must be focused just as Paul was as he writes to Timothy before his execution,

For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing. Do your best to come to me soon. -2 Timothy 4:6-9

Through this determination, the whole worth of his life was to please Christ and be driven by the gospel.

The church in its original emergence in Acts 2, reflected people from different cultural backgrounds, hearing their native cultural tongue. In the data, 100% of pastors want their churches to be diverse. In Acts 2, the church is reflective of what these pastors want to gain. Acts 2:5-12 states,

Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. And they were amazed and astonished, saying, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.” And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” -Acts 2:5-12

They heard their native tongue and they heard the mighty works of God. But can you imagine this day, where no one knows your native language except you. All of sudden by way of the Holy Spirit, your native tongue is spoken correctly by one who has never heard or spoken your language before. The story continues, as these people were amazed while others still mocked them and accused them of having too much wine. But the apostles reminded them of the prophecy in Joel.

But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel: “‘And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; even on my male servants* and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy. And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke; the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day. And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.’ -Acts 2:16-21

Reflective of the data in chapter 4, the ultimate desire is for the church to be multicultural. But 80% has to do with what's actually being proclaimed from the pulpit which is black liberation theology and issues of the community. Through this data, it shows a pure conscience with a conflicted heart. It also can be stated as a pure heart with a conflicted conscience. But it all stems from the result that church planters and pastors desire multicultural churches but preach a non-contextualized singularized cultural sermon. This has a limited scope of reach as it only pertains to one focus and one people. Church planting helps mobilize the church as it accomplishes the goal of learning different types of contexts.

Every church should be involved in the process of church planting. Whether it be prayer or giving physical resources, something should take place. The initial steps to get this done is to first aim to develop a network for church planting or join an already established organization for church planting. But the main recommendation is to establish a network of churches which would cultivate leaders and send them out. Through prayer and research one is able to capitalize on leadership and location. Especially in the black community this would break the habit of black liberation theology. This would involve providing Christian educational training provided through Seminary or Divinity school with the inclusion of conferences and whatever type of necessary training. To help attain the training, churches should provide funding to help the missional leader to focus on gaining as much insight as possible.

Also within the funding, it would help for the church to allocate funding for a planting location. For certain locations, even allocating a missional congregation who

would help the church grow. From one church many churches can be planted. And this same process plus any modifications necessary to repeat the pattern of the multiplicity of planting churches.

This network would also be responsible to share and compare information with others outside of the network and gain more perspective of church planting. Every church should have this as a goal at some point as it is responsible for spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ as it changes lives.

Focus On The Younger Generation

The gospel as generations change has no respect for age. Churches should target not only adults but spend a lot of time targeting children that will lead to guiding families into the church. Speaking from personal experience, the gospel can change lives especially the life of a child. It is quite important that children be targeted and be seen as valuable to the kingdom. With the churches observed, 60% of each population is 30%, 18-30 and 30%, 40-65. With young adulthood, people make more decisions for Christ especially through the building of families. Ultimately, this is built through children. 10% of congregation are children. Children are near and dear to the heart of parents. Technically, the 10% has the potential of impacting the other 60%. Therefore, the church's growth is limited without efforts focused specifically on children, their spiritual growth and maturity. Being a youth pastor, it can be said that it's secondarily important to the pastor as their responsibility is to lead the next generation of church leaders. There is no greater way than to guide them in the fear and admonition of the Lord. Proverbs 22:6 says "to train a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from

it.” Consequently, to raise up a nation of strong Christian men and woman, they must be taught to serve the Lord from childhood.

With this data, its important to focus on youth by making youth a priority in the church. They are the next generation church. Currently, I serve as a youth pastor and I know for a fact that youth can cause families to come to church, but they must feel just as important as everyone else. Their must be a bi-annual or annual revival or conference that takes place that is purely focused on the youth. And whenever their is a main church program or event, their always must be a youth component. This would also extend to the young adults as they have a potential longer life expectancy more so than those older. They are also responsible for helping to build families.

And within these events, it must engage social and spiritual elements. It is quite important to train youth to know and practice gospel-centric values in and outside the church. For example, the social could be ice skating, a ball, movie night and so much more. But it exposes children especially children from cities to new adventures. The spiritual component could be services, Bible studies, youth groups and more. These programs spark spiritual insight to make sure that they are equipped through the Bible. This opens the door for every church to potentially have a full time youth pastor. They would be the leader/shepherd to the youth. A full time youth pastor is a necessity as their job is to single handily focus on providing the needs of the youth of the church. It also helps promote being gospel-centered.

Get Rid of Black Liberation Theology

During this study, black liberation theology has been key to struggle as to why blacks and black churches are not church planting. It affects the whole focus, context in the light of the gospel. In chapter 3, we see the dramatic effects that it takes on black people especially the view of Jesus. It promotes a pro black approach which causes other blacks to see the gospel in light of being black. This is even evident in chapter 1 looking at the historical analysis of the inception of the black institutionalized church. It's learned that through the inception of the church its important to personalize Christ through race rather than redemption. Also, it promotes the Old Testament story of Moses and the Exodus as blacks search for their exodus especially through American Slavery and the Reconstruction of America. Truly, it suggests their is a black God strictly for black people. Black liberation theology was used as encouragement during slavery as it would push blacks to cross over to the promised land. It focused on the story of Moses and the exodus from Egypt. In this particular context, blacks were the Israelites and the civil rights leader was Moses. Blacks would take this passage and even apply it to economic empowerment in the black community. This has crippled blacks as they focused on things such as prosperity rather than what Jesus teaches us about suffering and spreading the gospel. Black liberation theology breaks the mind of the church as it promotes culture over the cross.

Liberation theology is the enabling of bringing false realities to the gospel especially for blacks in America. Black liberation theology creates and promotes the idea of focusing on the idolatry of the self. According to research, black liberation theology is

a theology for blacks which excludes whites which contradicts Paul's take on salvation.

Paul writes in Romans 10:9-13,

For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. For the Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame." For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."- Romans 10:9-13

Black liberation theology must be gotten rid of because nothing can separate the love of Christ whomever is willing to believe. Romans 8:37-39 states, "For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." Black liberation theology can change if churches expose the congregations to the history of it and the role it has played. Contextualization is also key to explain. Finally, to achieve the goal of educating the congregants as to what and why they believe through the Bible. This should be shared where they can be accessible by membership on the website, social media, handouts, etc... This would require the pastor to have a sermon accountability group.

Another recommendation would be that the pastor to have a sermon accountability group. It can be people in or outside the church who will critique the message to make sure its clear to the proper theological framework in the Bible. As the pastor should spend time engaging in the spiritual disciplines to make sure he or she hears from God.

Also, the pastor should attend conferences that engage them in preaching and hearing theological views from different churches to gain perspective and make sure that

the church has proper theology. Black liberation theology is a theology that's focused on being black more than serving Christ.

**Plant Churches and Build
Love God, Love People, Share Christ, Make Disciples**

By way of being gospel centered should attract church planting. If using the Pauline method, then it's with cultivating leaders and send them out to fulfill the great commission. Churches everywhere should take part in this important responsibility, especially in the black community.

In the United States of America alone only 6.9% of the church population is comprised of black churches.⁵ And churches of other descent comprised 26.5%⁶ Therefore, there is a great need for the black community to take charge with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Not only will there be a tremendous impact in their respective cultural communities but more blacks need to take charge in other communities. There is a tremendous need for blacks to be empowered especially here in the United States where there is a known problem of social injustice through racism. Now, it is important that black leadership deal with these ills but in the light of all God's people. Recently, blacks have been in powerful seats only to see the ills of racism crash on their heads. The gospel will in fact make a tremendous difference. Blacks just as any other people group are called to make a difference in the world that they live in today through this beneficial gospel. Because the gospel causes people to respond, then it is time for blacks to plant

⁵ "Religious Landscape Survey." Pew Research & Public Life Project, <http://religions.pewforum.org/affiliations> (accessed May 30, 2014).

⁶ "Religious Landscape Survey." Pew Research & Public Life Project, <http://religions.pewforum.org/affiliations> (accessed May 30, 2014).

churches and build by the right motives with the gospel leading the way and culture in the background.

According to the research in chapter 4, 70% of churches want to plant and 30% have done it before but both feel like their a lack of monetary resources. Much money has gone to waste as 90% of the churches have progressed outside the city and at times far away from their partitioners. So there needs to be a shift especially in the strategy of church planting. The church and church planters everywhere are to trust Jesus especially if He professed that if planters and pastors focus on the gospel, He will build it.

It is imperative that black communities follow the model of being gospel-centered, becoming an Acts 2 church, killing personal agendas and focusing on spiritual disciplines, focus on being intergenerational, getting rid of black liberation theology, and get involved with planting churches. Through church planting, things will change for the positivity of the black church. This all boils down to a model and concept of loving God (making Him first), loving people (love the people you serve), sharing Christ (proclaim Him), making disciples (developing the church through His proclamation) and launch (share with others).

In this conclusion, please note that the church is important and the church plant is important. But all churches should seek the same manor of changing lives through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In this church it must be guided by discipline as well making sure Christ is the end all of the whole work. He promises to provide the Holy Spirit which will make the difference. All churches and especially the black community must take heed to this. And as a result, they must plant churches and start networks as the Gospel

can be spread far and wide to make the difference that the world needs today. The church plant is designed to be a house of prayer. But blacks should take a role in leadership to spread the gospel through planting churches. These churches will make a difference in the communities at large.

The final recommendation is to trust the Lord as He has mandated to go throughout the world and spread the Gospel. In the spreading of His Gospel, we are called to do whatever it takes to make sure that the voice of the Lord be heard especially throughout churches. When having the greatest tool which is Christ, the church is capable of having faith to build one to change lives of the world at large.

This requires great trust and faith in Jesus Christ knowing that the Holy Spirit will empower the church to the very end. This faith must never be swayed away from.

Patrick writes,

If you are a pastor or church planter, you will face many moments where you are ready to tap out and give up the good fight. The questions are: How will you make it? Where will you find the strength to keep going? If you remain faithful in ministry over the long haul, it will not be because of your ambitions, your strength of will, or your desire not to let others down. Amidst the buffetings of ministry, these motivations will eventually wane. The only way you will endure in ministry is if you determine to do so through the prevailing power of the Holy Spirit. The unsexy reality of the pastorate is that it involves hard work—the heavy-lifting, curse-ridden, unyielding employment of your whole person for the sake of the church. Pastoral ministry requires dogged, unyielding determination, and determination can only come from one source—God himself. In this chapter we are going to consider what it looks like to live as a determined pastor.⁷

Just as Patrick writes, it takes a person determined to trust the Lord knowing that He never fails. One who has this extraordinary faith and determination will be the one that

⁷ Darrin Patrick, *Church Planter: The Man, the Message, the Mission* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 94, Kindle.

makes a difference. The Lord will honor this difference maker as they focus on winning souls and making disciples. Black churches and all churches are called to church plant and build. They are called to be the catalyst to lives being changed through the gospel of Jesus Christ. There are many models and strategies but one that should be followed is churches planting churches. Ed Stetzer gives insight on it as it needs a vision (visionary), a reason which is the gospel (cultivating new leaders and sending them out), and becoming a sponsoring church (find methods to make it happen that are God ordained). He writes,

The role of a sponsoring church is vital to the church-planting and church-reproduction process. Church planters should remember their divine calling not just to plant one church but also to continue planting churches long after their first church has been launched and developed. Pastors of established churches should use this information to create a tradition, a legacy of missions and church planting for their churches.⁸

The church is called to multiply. Black churches are called to multiply off being gospel-centered. The gospel is the message that the church lives by. Without the gospel, the world is deprived. The black church is called to multiply in a time like this to touch the world with the message of Jesus Christ.

As a believer, the end result should always be Jesus! The Gospel! Black churches shouldn't be placed to have culture control them. Black churches should be planted, but it takes a culture that is gospel-centered that is willing to make a difference for the cause of Christ. This requires not focusing being black or secondary issues. This requires a person sold out to the gospel without compromise. Whereby they know how to speak the

⁸ Ed Stetzer, *Planting Missional Churches* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2006), 323-324, Kindle.

language of the culture but not sell out to this culture over the gospel. This requires church planting with the right motive and intentions. It requires all people inclusive of blacks to do so. Through the gospel, tremendous churches with tremendous impact can be planted. There are many physical methods and strategies to plant a church. However, it takes the gospel of Jesus Christ for the church to be sustained. No method or strategy will be successful without the gospel.

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